

# A moment of presence

*Narratives of real and imagined*



*Pinocchio's Children Library*

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## *Abstract*

An outcome of my personal struggles, inquiries and great excitement, this study attempts to answer a question that although it is surprisingly simple I have yet to find a simple answer and thus I find it important to not be consigned to oblivion especially in nowadays' world of digital ecstasy.

*What is a great moment of presence...*

...that we experience in our intimate confrontation with a space, could be it a monument or the backyard garden? We find ourselves searching for the ideal form defining our design, but its anchoring into place has nothing to do with that. Then what has it to do with?

This album desires to showcase an encounter with such a strong moment of presence, understand it, and aims until the very end to raise questions of perception along a process that doesn't have a finite end, but hopefully continues in the mind of the reader after the last page of this album. The framework makes use of the phenomenological approach in order to understand the complexity of the narratives that arises at the intimate encounter with a place, narratives that instigate melancholy, passion or tension and ultimately encompass a great moment of presence. At the arrival, the work is focused towards assembling a project that endeavors to deliver such a presence, unveiling narratives of *real* and *imagined*. The whole research is a *repository of stories*, of atmospheres and thus presents a way of thinking, an approach rather than a definite solution to a task.

The intervention calls for a children library and museum for Pinocchio stories in a picturesque corner of Italy: Collodi. As a support, it is based on the design task of a competition, but questions and adjusts the amplitude of the program in regards to the place.

Ultimately, this study learns how to ask the right questions rather than give definite answers. The final design remains humble to the place but desires to provoke emotion and bring with ardour and thrill an invitation for discovering a moment of *presence* through an architecture of empathy.

*This is not the project of a building.*

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## *A poetic discourse*

It all starts and ends with the *place*: a tale from a remote and picturesque corner of Italy: Collodi.

Filtered through a phenomenological approach, the first and foremost important step towards understanding of the relationship between ‘man, body and the world’<sup>1</sup> has at the heart of it the evocative description of the place. A series of observations and poetic receptivity followed by the strong entity of the characters of the place will build the grounds for the upcoming design: a children library and museum for the stories of the Pinocchio, the puppet destined to become a boy.

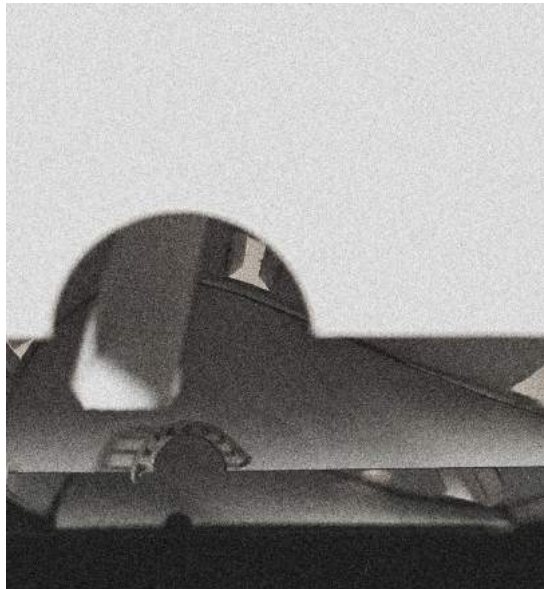
This album is built through sequences of *narratives*, addressing a multitude of questions of perception related to the intimacy of our encounters with a space, how the atmosphere perceived talks to us at the experiential level and finally, at the arrival, how that is reflected in the design of the project- a project that learns to speak of materiality while taking into account the tectonic character of its surroundings and accepting the uncertainty of the outcome.

The study focuses more on the process than on the final result and addresses the distrust of human embodiment while talking about architecture and its subjectivity given by the many facets it can have. Determined to find a richer perspective from which we can address questions that provide the structure for a building that occupies and en-strengthens an urban place in Collodi, the intervention aims to present an architecture constructed upon imagined spaces: a children library and museum for the stories, characters and places of the Pinocchio Story.

The process begins with a return to phenomenology to set the grounds for the descriptive phase that follows: a sequence of perceptual frames of the place that are being revealed as in direct experience. Along with my own perceptions, this album explores the dependency of the characters with the site acknowledging the multitude and variety of stories disclosing the narrative of Collodi. Their contribution is significantly important because the analysis and the narrative told with it serve as a background for the intuitions of the upcoming design.

Balancing between reality and imagination, a new scenario is prescribed and along with it, a new perception of a place: not a perception that replaces the old, but *completes* it. After the library has communicated its story, the journey ends with a return with receptivity to the *place*, encountering it again, as for the first time.





*Theory*

## In a return to phenomenology...

This study is supported by theory in the attempt to understand why and how space affects us and builds perceptions, mental images that distort in our mind the actual reality. Through this understanding I would like to prescribe a scenario that can create conditions for encounters, acknowledging the possibility of the new children library to provoke and to challenge the emotions, activities and ultimately, deliver a moment of presence.

As the approach is multifaceted and relative, I want to address the trustworthiness of the phenomenological issues that my thesis is dealing with. It has been proved that there is a certain objectivity in this subjectivity; there are things that amaze us with their beauty or scare us in the same way until a certain level, when one's own image comes into play; an image that refers to an *inner self*, which is the outcome of the experienced, conceived or dreamed realities. It could be argued that the phenomenological approach is not trustworthy considering its relativity, but the most significant test is nothing else other than the very power to *draw the readers into the story* and even more, because everyone of us comes from a different place, experienced through life different situations, it leads to an even deeper way of understanding, breaking us free from our usual perceptions.<sup>2</sup>

To start with, phenomenology means nothing else than a *return to object*<sup>3</sup>. Before assuming and prescribing a different scenario, I find it important to *return* to the object, to the place in order to foresee what its demands. And because the city and the objects are experienced directly and discovered solely through intuition, it begins with the simple 'looking at' things, observing, experiencing. In the given context, the multitude of thresholds that are being perceived is precisely what gives it the sense of place. At the same time, it is interesting to see how can a place have different meanings for each of us but at the same time still be a part of a *collective unique identity*.

In addition to the evocative description of the place, another layer of complexity is given by the dialectical relationship between the lived, conceived and perceived space. Henri Lefebvre's theory focuses on this link between the city and the social practices of everyday life. By analyzing the behavior of people in public urban spaces, these social patterns can be found and furthermore they can help shape intuitions for the proposed scenario. I strongly believe there is a symbiotic relationship between the place and its characters and this book is aiming to show further precisely this dependency between the site and the narratives being told through its users.

Consequently, I consider defining the concept of place of a major importance as it has been essential for the entire thought-process. **Place** as not merely some sort of enclosed container that holds us within, but rather of place as precisely that which, though the manner in which it holds us (and so through its very character as limiting or bounding), also allows us access to that which lies beyond its boundaries- allows us access to the world<sup>4</sup>.

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2 Seamon, David. *Phenomenology, Place, Environment and Architecture: A Review of the Literature*. <http://www.environment.gen.tr/environment-and-architecture/113-phenomenology-place-environment-and-architecture-a-review-of-the-literature.html>

3 Stenros, Helmer ; Aura, Seppo. 1987. *Time, motion and architecture : a study of the significance of time and motion in architecture and the use of an environmental simulator as an aid in design*. Hki : Amer, pp. 96

4 Malpas, Jeff. 2015. *The intelligence of place : topographies and poetics*. London ; New York : Bloomsbury Aca-

As Jeff Malpas theorizes, the fascinating complexity of the place lies exactly in its power to connect us with other places, with other persons, but also with other memories and histories. Within this definition, I find alluring this great ability that place gives us, precisely to *access the world*, challenging our bodies; bodies that have been the very *measure* of space. But what is space?

It is thought-provoking to see how great philosophers defined it, because it leads to a wider and deeper comprehension of what it is that we are surrounded by. Aristotle devised the concept of space as *topos* (place)-as the inner surface of the surrounding body, while Descartes defined it as *spatium*, distance between bodies. What is necessary to understand is that both concepts, *topos* and *spatium*, primarily refer to our bodies. After understanding that people, characters are the very measure of space and that space itself is where our bodies find their place, my research focused and found a keen interest in the sincere encounter with the place and more so what happens between the built environment and self.

I believe it is important to address that on one hand the place in itself is a repository of memories, but at the same time our own memories ‘distort’ the place and enrich it with our own perceptions and interpretations. That is the reason why architecture doesn’t tell one single story. It encloses different stories, of different people that experience it every day. Moreover, Alberto Pérez-Gómez is addressing this issue and acknowledges that moods are not ‘merely’ subjective. In perceptual experience they are the fundamental ‘setting the tone for cognition, action and thought’<sup>5</sup>.

The reason why I stress the importance of the things mentioned above is because understanding them leads to a better comprehension of the issue that we try to respond through the design of a project and for this reason it becomes essential for its *anchoring* into place. Architecture is enriched with this great power of affecting our lives and it is compelling to see how volumetries and colors impact our inner self subconsciously. As Juhani Pallasmaa talks about in ‘Encounters’, the work of art’s meaning lies not in its forms, but in the *images transmitted* by the forms and the emotional force that they carry. Form only affects our feelings through what it represents. Similarly, so does the architecture<sup>6</sup>.

With that in mind, returning to theory provided me the ground for the methodological understanding of the place and thus my research attempts to understand what happens between the form and the perceived image. Ultimately, after this thorough process, it is assembling a scenario that can deliver such a *moment of presence* through an architecture that anchors into place and, as I like to call it, an architecture of empathy.

The next pages will briefly showcase a few key words that built the foundations of this study and that are present throughout these pages in a written or unwritten form, but more importantly, they have been echoing in my mind throughout the entire process.

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5 Pérez-Gómez, Alberto. 2016. *Attunement, Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science*. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press

6 Pallasmaa, Juhani ; MacKeith, Peter ; Tullberg, Diana C. ; Wynne-Ellis, Michael. 2005. *Encounters, architectural essays*. Rakennustieto

*“An inalienable presence; ...all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world.”*

Merleau-Ponty (2002)



### **presence**

noun UK /prez.əns/ US /prez.əns/

B2 [ S ] the fact that someone or something is in a place:

*Cambridge English Dictionary*





an architecture of '**fragile image**'

contextual , multi-sensory, and responsive, concerned with experiential interaction and sensual accommodation. This architecture grows gradually, scene by scene, rather than quickly manifesting a simple, domineering concept.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Pallasmaa, Juhani ; MacKeith, Peter ; Tullberg, Diana C. ; Wynne-Ellis, Michael. 2005 *Encounters, architectural essays*. Rakennustieto



### **bibliotheca, liberaria, libraria, liberey**

used from the Middle Ages and Antiquity to denote either an entire building, a room or simply just a cupboard for storing books, as evidenced by the occasional use of the term armarium (a locked closet or chest)<sup>8</sup>

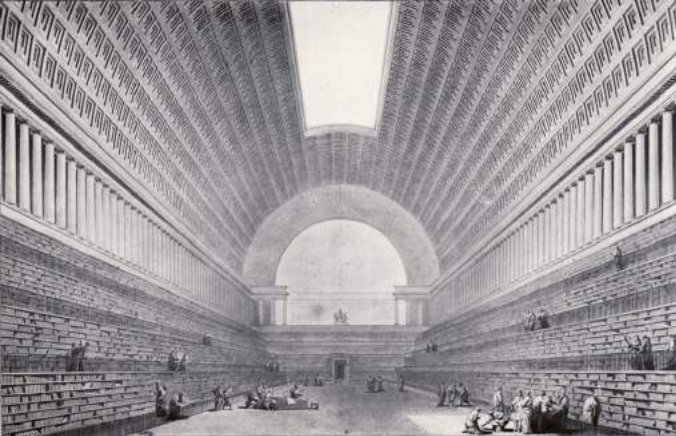
### **bybliothecae**

plural, used by Vitruvius in *Ten Books on Architecture* which he dedicated to the Emperor Augustus (around 33BC) referring to the cupboards in which the scrolls were kept: 'Bedrooms and libraries ought to have an eastern exposure, because their purposes require the morning light'<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Reallexikon zur Deutschen Kunstgeschichte (Encyclopaedia of German Art History) in Nolan Lushington, Wolfgang Rudolf, Liliane Wong. 2014. *Libraries – A Design Manual*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH, pp. 22

<sup>9</sup> Marcus Vitruvius Pollo. [1914] *The Ten Books on Architecture, Book VI*, Chapter IV, Sec 1, translated by Morris Hicky Morgan. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20239>

<sup>10</sup> Collodi, digital image of cartographic material (recomposed by the author), accessed January 21 2018  
<http://www502.regione.toscana.it/geoscopio/castore.html>



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## An argument for a library

After explaining the origins of the library, I would like to expose my own thoughts on the library of 21st Century.

As I reflect upon it, still today, in a world of digital ecstasy, it is an institution that holds on to its significance and importance. I have been interested in discovering what this exactly means especially because if we assume that people are changing considering the technology, it is important to know that the digital collection has not replaced the physical one, rather it has been assimilated. I still believe that even now, even in ten, twenty or thirty years, the pleasure of holding in hands a book and smelling the old paper gives us a somewhat... an erotic pleasure. Furthermore, the library as a building is powerful because it can provide a place where people feel welcomed and where they can meet others that have similar interests. In that sense, it becomes even more important nowadays', when the digital means can provide such broad contacts but at the same time perhaps more shallow.

Looking back how this program has evolved, although I am not going to present a history of it, as this is not the purpose of this paper, I would like to stress on the *principle* that has always stayed at the building roots of this institution. As most of the times architects are concerned with the outside volumetry, it is refreshing to see that the libraries have always been born *from the inside out*. The interior space played a central role in the design and attained atmosphere of the project. To be more specific I want to give as an example Etienne-Louis Boullée's design for the National Library., where the concern for the outside volumetry becomes secondary. The building has at the heart of it a monumental elongated vaulted space and the major importance in the design play the bookshelves, becoming the main actors in the library.

Nowadays, with the constant changes, the library needs to adapt as well and understand the need of the community it welcomes inside. It needs to provide this attractive space not only for books, but also for people to come together and be creative so that it becomes a mutual 'exchange' between the library and its visitors.

To conclude, I believe that this institution is not only a cultural icon, but through their compelling complexity, libraries are *reflections* and above all, 'an image of a well-ordered world'<sup>11</sup> that will always hold on to their permanence and constantly adapt to the society that is being placed in.

11 Nolan Lushington, Wolfgang Rudorf, Liliane Wong. 2014. *Libraries – A Design Manual*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH, pp. 30

12 Etienne-Louis Boullée's design for the National Library, 1785, digital photograph, accessed April 3rd 2018

<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/3a/36/8b/3a368b24a48fb1198cd1ee060c5eda6f.png>

*The taste of the apple...lies in the contact of the fruit with the palate, not in the fruit itself; in a similar way..poetry lies in the meeting of the poem and reader not in the lines of symbols printed on the pages of a book.What is essential is the aesthetic act, the thrill, the almost physical emotion that comes with each reading.*

Jorge Luis Borges, Forward to *Obra Poetica*



*Finding place*



2.

5.

4.

5.

1.

## Exigencies

### Competition brief

Pinocchio Children's Library in Collodi, Italy  
September 11 - December 13 2017  
Young Architects Competition

The place is not other than the very town Pinocchio story was born. The new intervention needs to respond to the exigencies of the program and the place, as the village changes appearance and language within a few meters. A unique whole of memories, a succession of little houses and steep alleyways. Surrounded the unadorned style of the medieval buildings as well as the sumptuous opulence of the baroque Villa Garzoni, the place provides an invitation to design a *children library* and a *museum* for Pinocchio stories.

*Collodi is Pinocchio and Pinocchio is Collodi*

...as the competition brief suggests.

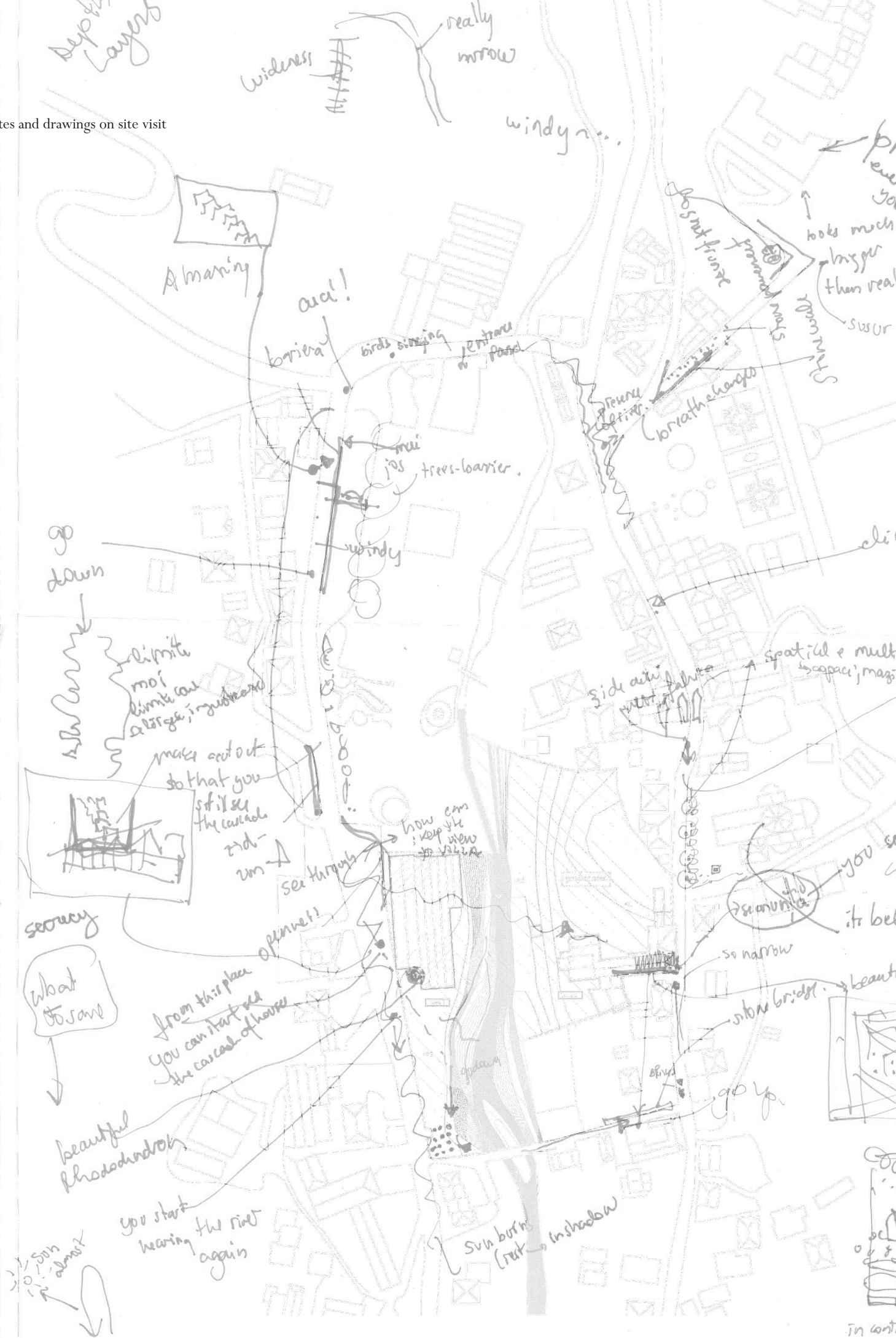
The complexity of the place is thus given by the multitude of elements, atmospheres and places: the Pinocchio's park, the complex of Villa Garzoni and its garden and the old Paper factory. All surrounded by the mosaic of houses.

My Thesis takes the competition site and program, but questions it in relation to the place. In the following pages, this album tries to feel the rhythms of the place, its patterns and movements, the possibilities it enables in order to understand what it imposes and therefore, the amplitude of the program takes a different scale. The program requirements are re-evaluated and the intervention is molding into the place.

1. The Complex of Villa Garzoni
2. The Pinocchio's Park
3. The Church
4. The Paper Factory
5. Intervention area



Notes and drawings on site visit



culori pastelati, obloane de fierin, ferestrele înrămate, geanduri transparente, limite moi, te



The left margin contains several handwritten notes and sketches. At the top, it says 'presence' and 'anywhere' followed by 'are inclined to turn your head'. Below this is a small sketch of a rectangular object. Further down, it says 'mbs up' with an upward arrow. Below that is a sketch of a square with a circle inside, labeled 'mai dilemstat'. Then, 'e it from far away' is written. Below that is 'elf ring 14:00' and a sketch of four small rectangular blocks. At the bottom, there is a sketch of a building with the word 'dish' next to it, and another sketch of a building with 'smoke as one' written next to it. At the very bottom, it says 'rastu' and 'tonica caslos'.

## Methodology

The approach emphasizes the importance of the encounter with the place, the perceived atmosphere standing at the roots of the intuitions preceding the design. The city and the objects are experienced directly and explored through intuition and thus the analysis starts with my own perception of Collodi, followed by a showcase of how other people perceive it as well, in the attempt to build a whole complex image of it.

The first and foremost important step towards the understanding of the exigencies imposed by the place is the encounter with it, *observing*.

So everything starts with a simple walk, trying to feel the rhythms of the place, its characters patterns and movements, the possibilities it enables in order to understand later on what it imposes. In doing so, the small town draws me into its own atmosphere, interiority and character but at the same time it projects me outwards as how I perceive the place is affected and influenced by my past experiences, my childhood memories that shaped who I am today and how I perceive the space with my whole being. Thus what I have found being most sincere is the simple *observation*. Looking at the landscape without a hierarchy in mind, but trying to pay attention to all the present scales, from the small to big; what Pallasmaa calls: the *unfocused peripheral vision*. The experience is being transferred on a piece of paper. It gives me certainty as the memory recalls only for the essential. Changes of atmospheres, sequence by sequence build an image of a whole that cannot be found in site plans because it talks about the life that the site provides ground for and in regards to this, the air-bird view of the maps becomes redundant.

The very 'raw' notes and drawing taken at that time have materialized in what it will be revealed further on: a perception map, and along with it, the first intuitions of what the place imposes for the upcoming design.

Interviewer: Diana Rimniceanu (DR)

Interviewee: Barbara (B) middle-aged woman with red hair blue sparkling eyes

Interview time and location:

21.01.2018 Collodi

The duration of recording

00:04:11

DR: Come puoi descrivere con una parola Collodi?

B: è... favolosa . La favola di Pinocchio.

DR: Cosa ti piace di più? E qual'è il tuo posto preferito?

B: Villa Garzoni!!! SI!

DR: Cosa pensi che manchi?

B: Il business. Mancano gli imprenditori per poter fare più lavoro.

DR: Come ti immagini la libreria dei bambini?

B: Cosa mi immagini? Per un libro? Per bambini?

m.... Un libro per bambini. Una meravigliosa avventura!!!

### Unveiling Narratives. Placing characters

*The reader participates in the joy of creation...as though the reader were the writers ghost.*<sup>13</sup>

The narrative is used also as a way to communicate and provoke discussion with the locals.

Consequently, we can think of the narrative of the place as a collection of many, many different stories. The interviews taken at the site visit provide a showcase of the relationship between Collodi and its inhabitants about their day to day life but also with its visitors about their first reactions and impressions about the place. With that being said, I would like to point out that for a complex understanding and anchoring into place it is just as important to observe how people move in the area, what is the use of the space or how is the place imprinted in their memory. As I previously mentioned, how we perceive the place is very much affected by our own self, our past memories and experiences, and because of that curiosity lead me to talk with people living there, as their perception is different and becomes important in discovering the hidden layers of the place because there is no architecture without the simple everyday life, without movement and action.



Collodi site plan

## Frames and sequences

The short description that follows tries to recollect and to remember. I turn back in that place, but also back to *myself* as being in the present in that place. Walking is chosen as the *spine* of the analysis, as it is the first and foremost mode of perception. It serves as our universal human journey while providing ‘a space of recollection and meditation’<sup>14</sup>. The place is shown as a repository of memories and holds a history of its own, but at the same time we find ourselves building in our memory the site, piece by piece and thus we can see that our memory becomes this great container of places.

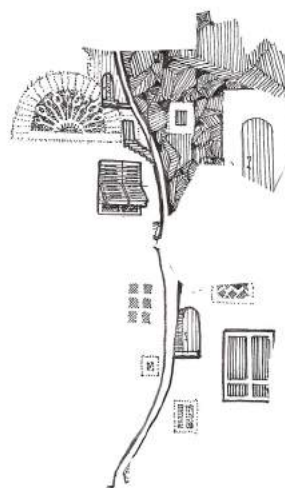
The mental map that will be revealed further underlines how surprisingly different our perception can be in comparison with the physical reality. The narrative displays two realities: one that reveals images, fragments of memories that build gradually the place and another that enriches the place with images, memories built by our own imagination, as we carry within ourselves this amazing container of images. With this in mind, the place is shown not as totalities, but as fragments. As in direct experience, architecture is initially understood as a series of partial perceptual experiences, rather than a totality. After being understood piece by piece, the complexity of the whole is revealed, exposing the links that are being established between these fragments.

<sup>14</sup> Pérez-Gómez, Alberto. 2016. *Attunement, Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science*. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press.

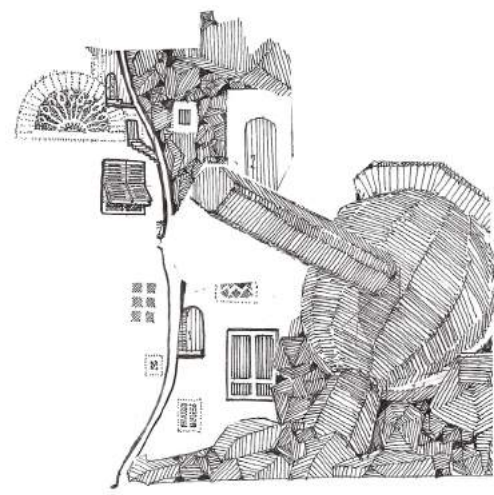
## *Confrontation*

January 12 2018

As I step outside the car, I let myself affected by the place.  
A sudden glory of the medieval town enters me.  
...and so silent. I can hear only footsteps. Mine. And a few children, from time to time.  
The opacity of the walls feeds my imagination and my mind builds up stories, tries to  
discover the secrets lying behind the thick walls and wooden shutters.



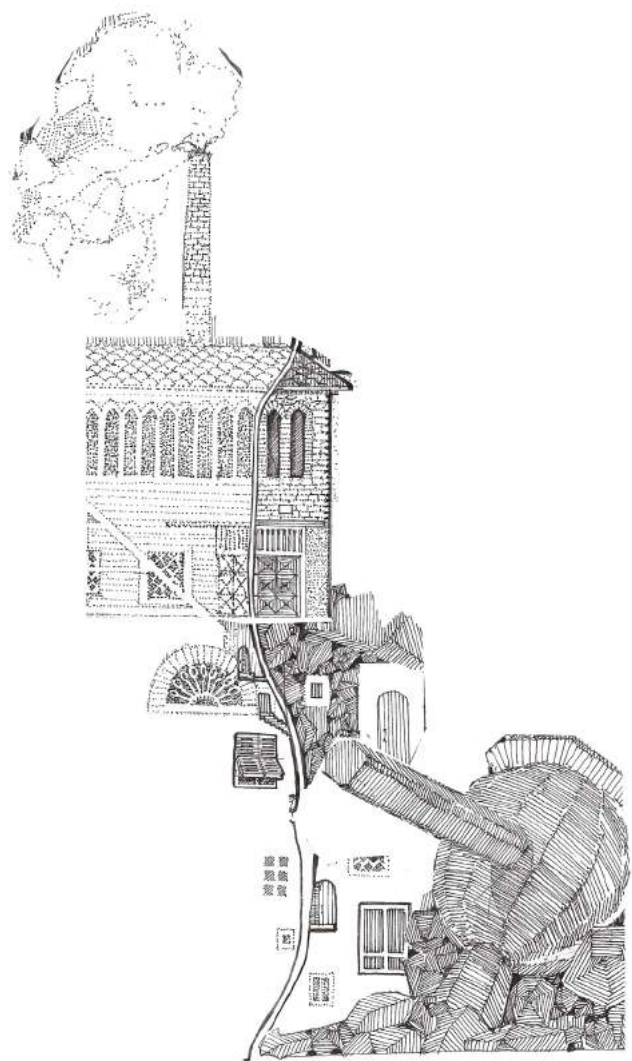
And in-between all that, Pinocchio, hidden but at the same time present all over the town. Modest indicators point towards the main attraction, the Pinocchio Park, but as I open my eyes, the most exceptional is Collodi itself: a play between surprise and anticipated, order and disorder, accidental against the regular that draws me in.



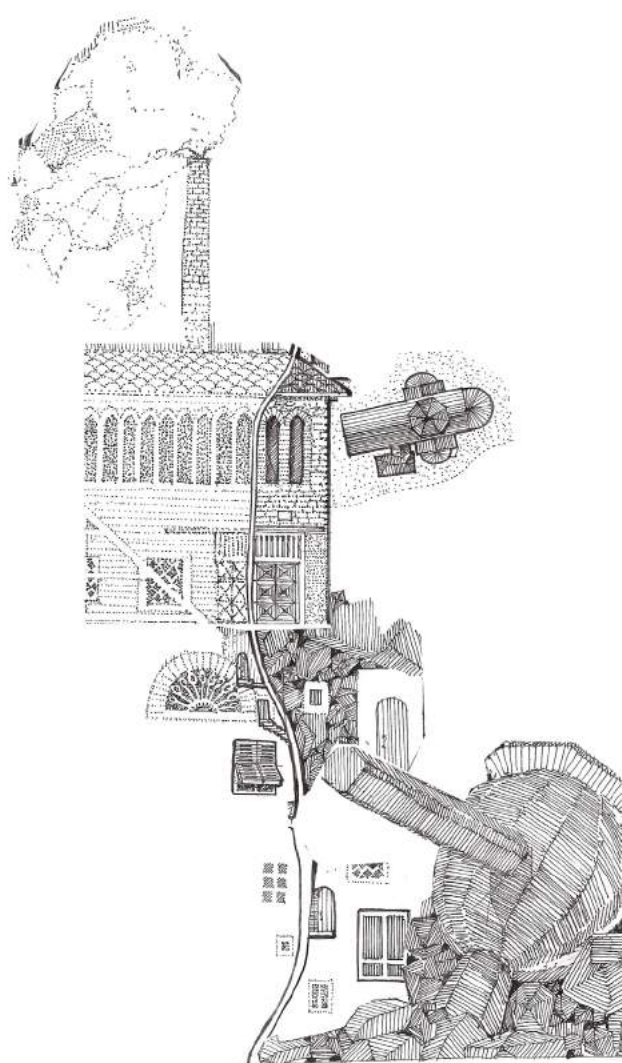
Right in front, long narrow windows embedded in a brick wall inspect the children coming to see Pinocchio's village. Asleep nowadays, the smokestack strongly brings back the times when the Paper Factory was functioning.

The invisible smoke is still a strong part of it, part of its presence. The Paper factory gives me a strange welcoming feeling. Those bricks talk on their own. The boundaries are fragile and the building steps on the alleyway, almost like asking me to come closer. The public turns into private and I find myself entering from the street the street of everybody into the intimate space of the factory without even realizing it. These imperceptible thresholds give an incredible sense of place and a surprising sensuality given by its secrecy and invitation. This place, this emptiness that spreads out in between the factory walls, overwhelms with its vibrancy. Almost stubborn. In this little pocket I enter another world. Another story about Collodi reveals itself. A story about the birth of paper, smoke and bricks.

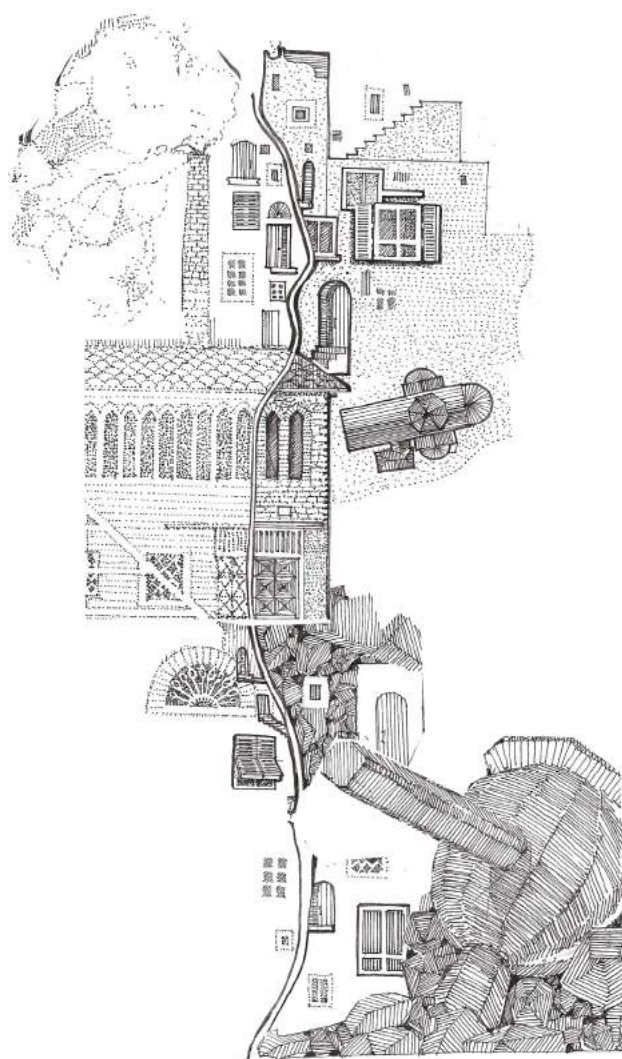




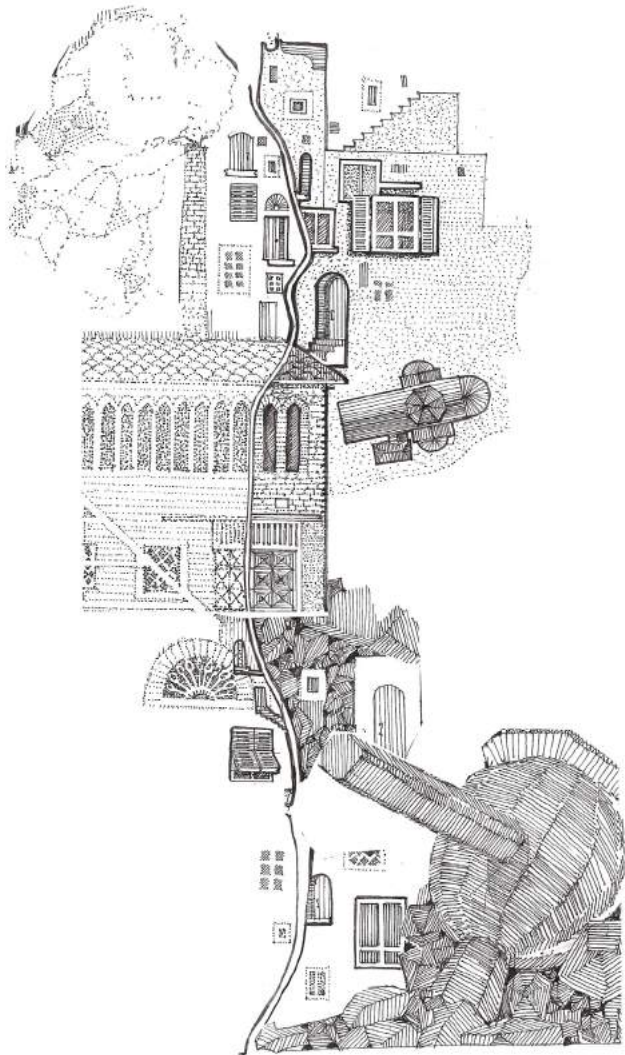
On my right, the imposing cathedral orders the space. The Church bell announces the 2 o'clock so I am on my way for a cup of tea.  
A simple walk, sensing the street with the muscles and skin and all of its convulsive beauty.



It seems that the houses aligning on the opposite sides of the trees want to come closer and closer together as the path becomes narrow and more narrow. A congeries of houses, in-between which the life is born. Full of atmosphere, storing the history, telling stories. Pastel colors, wooden shutters, framed windows, transparent fences, soft edges come in contrast with the tectonic houses.

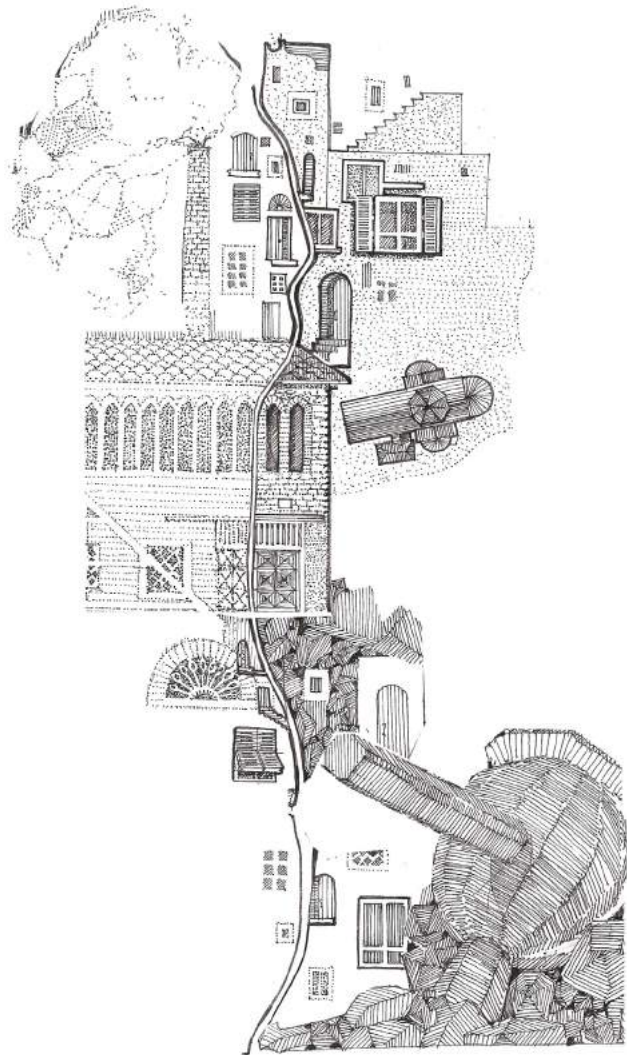


At each change of direction, like on a camera film, instances of Villa Garzoni are revealed and with all that, fragments of the cascade of little houses that climb up the hill. When I look under the surface I see the imaginary Collodi, the invisible Collodi, the poetic Collodi.

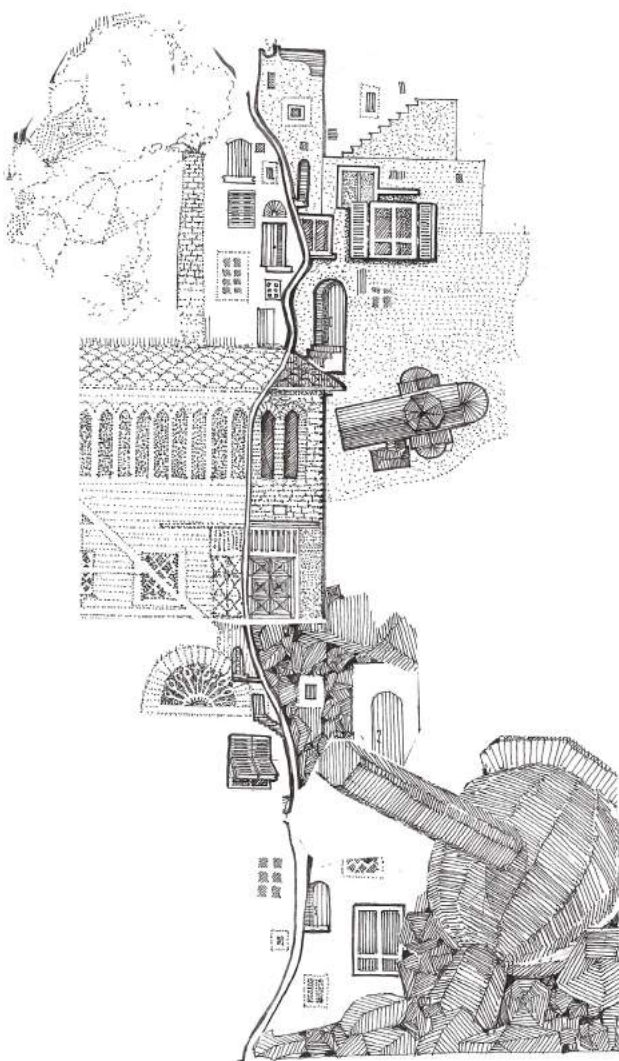


Pieces of puzzle come one by one at each turn.  
And then they disappear completely.

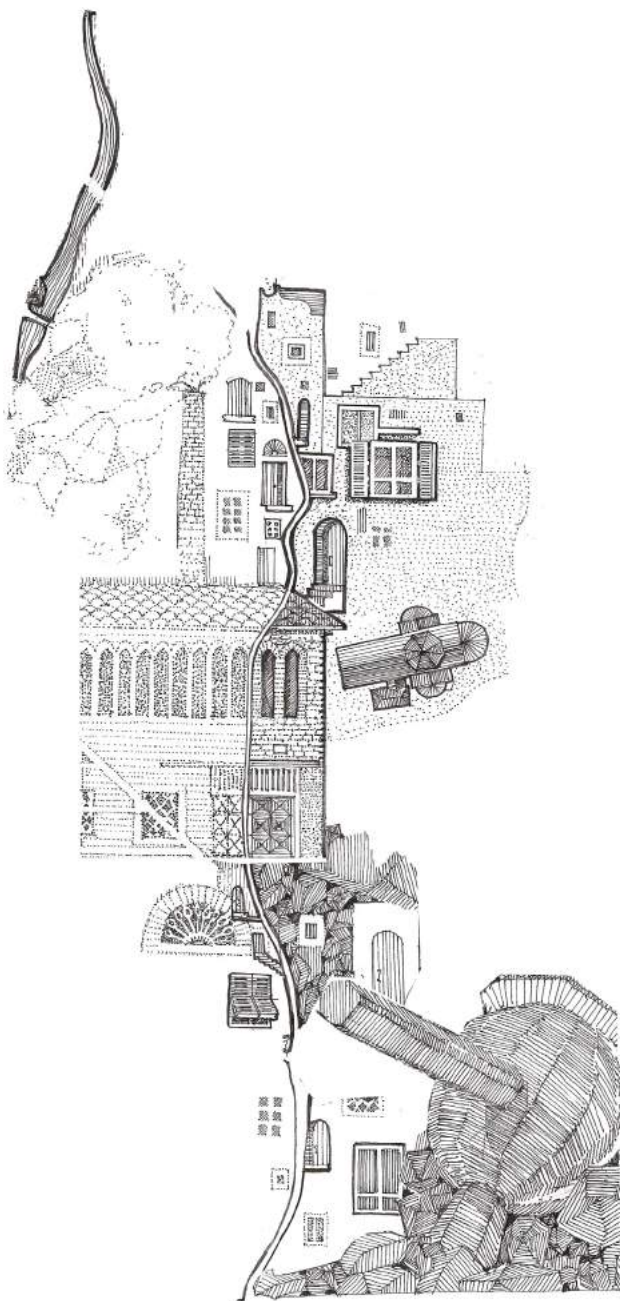




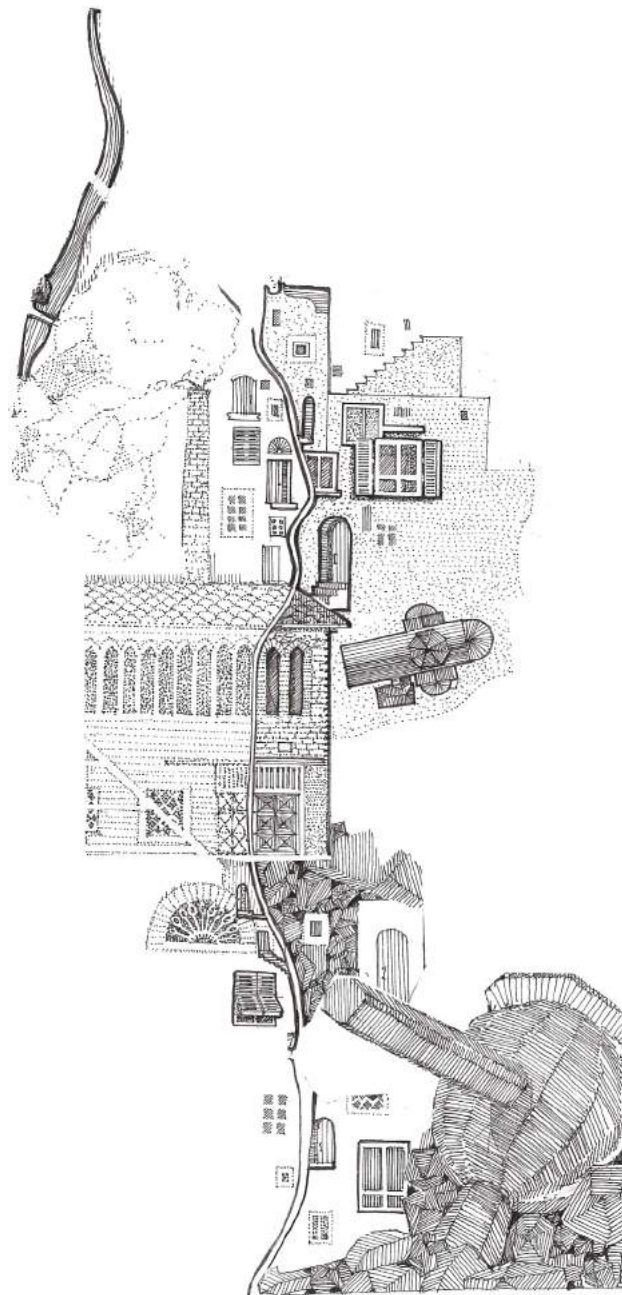
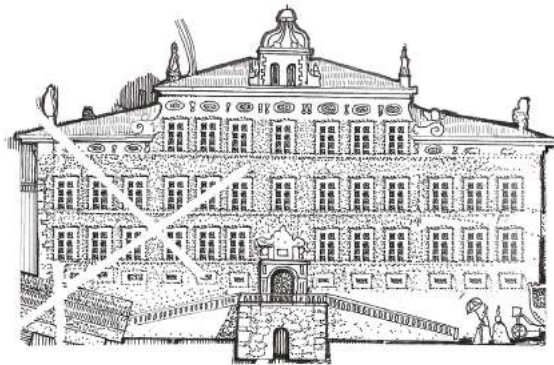
I want to go further just so that I can see them again.



The path becomes steep and my breath heavier, entering my consciousness. I measure the alleyway with my lungs; with my muscles and my skin. At the end of the it, for the first time, I hear the river shouting loudly. And struggling to be heard, the sound of the cuckoo. A wonderful range of sounds.



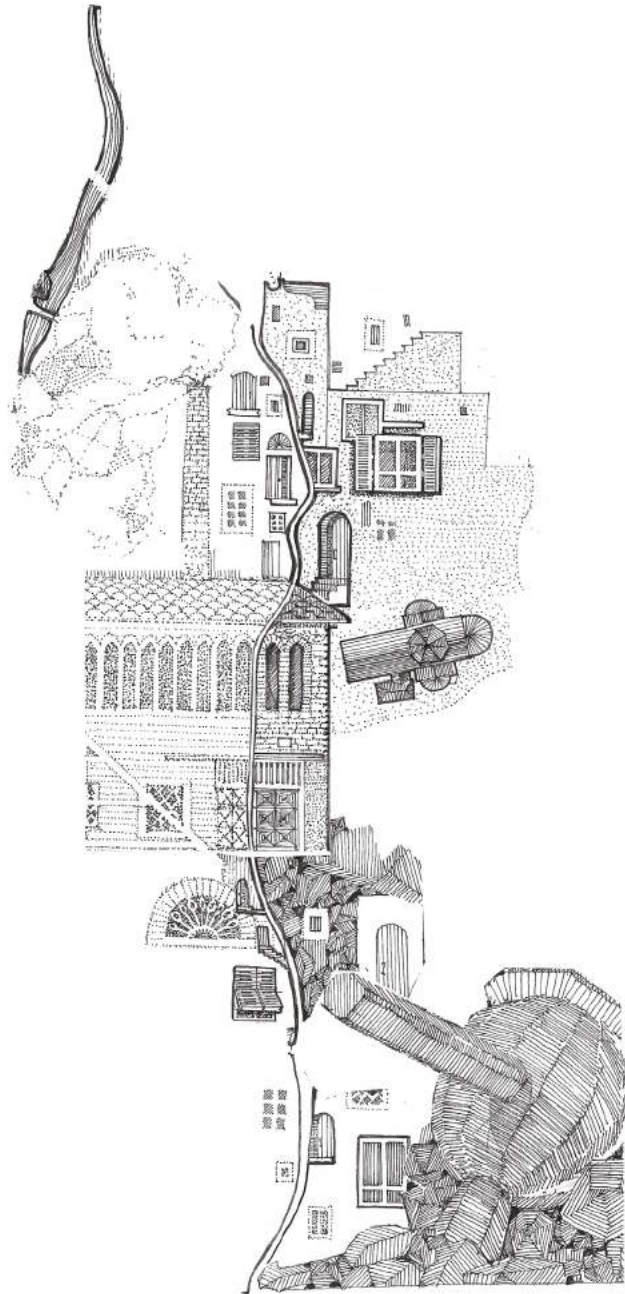
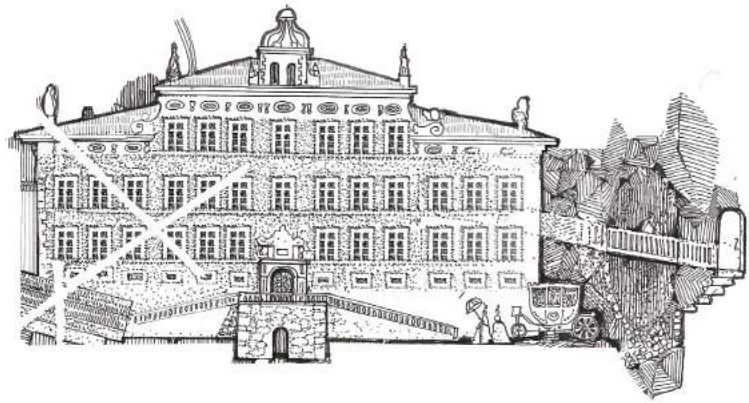
At the end of the sinuous path the complete picture reveals itself in its whole strength, a spectacle. As I arrive in its proximity, the Villa enters my soul and the place becomes a cinematic montage, a great moment of presence.



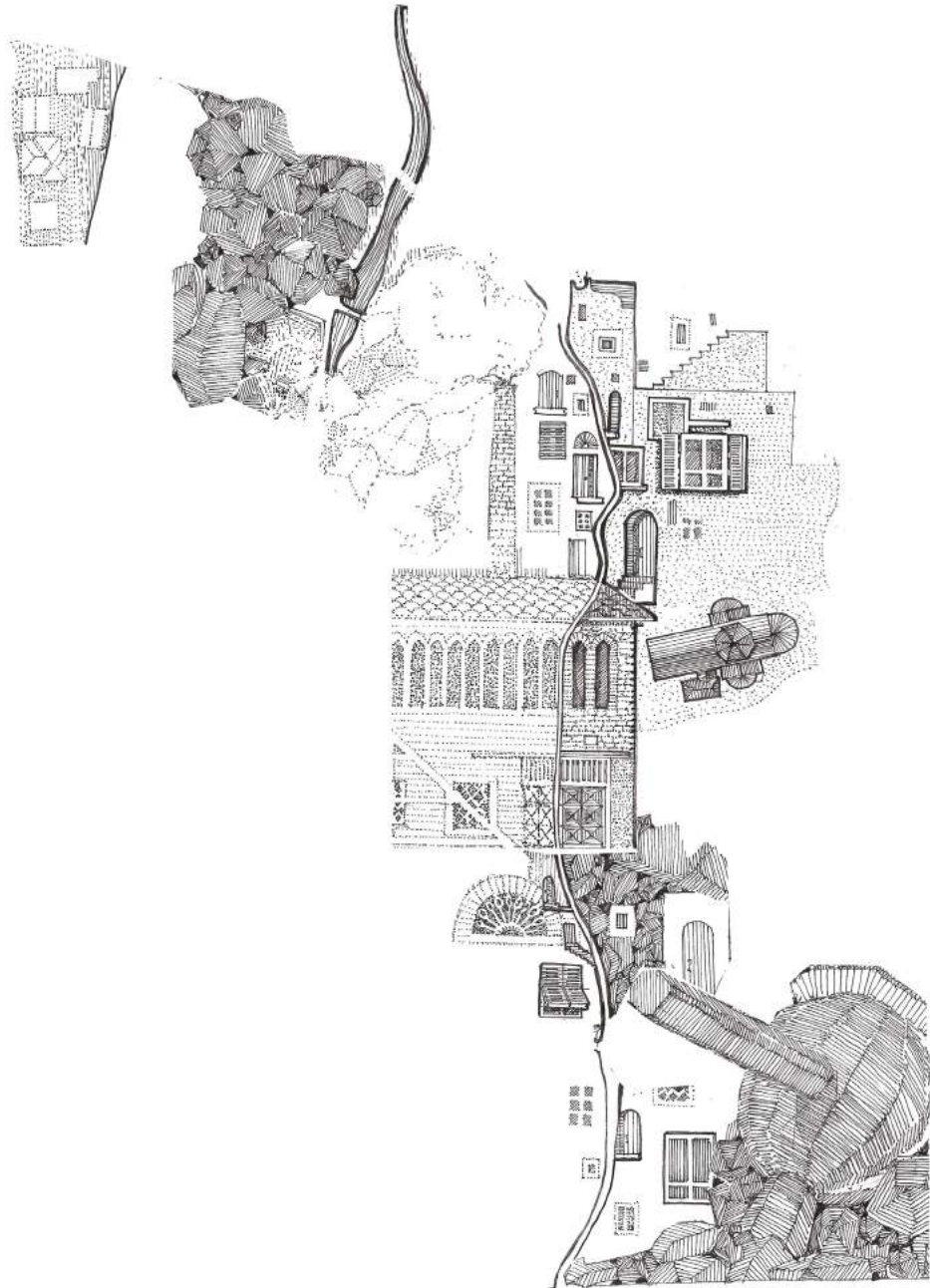
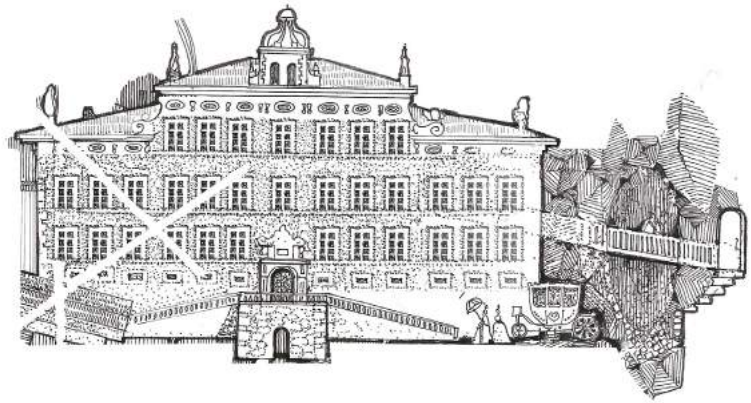
I can imagine women dressed up in elegant imposing ball dresses going out of the carriage at the entrance of the majestic baroque Villa on a night ball, waiting in line politely to go inside.

And the bridge? Where does it come from and where does it go? The incompleteness of the story is challenging my imagination, my dreams.





The alleyway takes a turn and it opens up, leaving me feel small. The trees of the park form an impenetrable wall. So dense. So I walk faster. Surpassing the park, the temperature is pleasantly fresh and still warm.



The villa is visible once again stopping the course of the unusual assemblage.  
Wherever I am, my inner instinct takes over the conscious decision and I turn my head  
to see the Villa and cascade of houses that wraps the hill endlessly.  
Under the warmth of the spring sun, the place becomes a living testimony, echoing in  
the present.





As I keep going, the road widens, the limits become vague and seem to ask questions,  
turning into a terrain vague.

Surpassing the impenetrable forest, the river becomes present again.

Louder than ever.

Closer than ever.

More present than ever.





The Rhododendron talks about life and birth right next to abandoned metal structures of what were once winter gardens. They no longer live, no longer grow inside beautiful flowers. But there is something about these structures that almost frustrates me. I want to pull the curtain of steel beams that shatters the image of the cascade of houses and the Villa. I want to see through.



Defeated, my steps are leading me to the narrow bridge and I find myself gazing again at the same long narrow windows embedded in the brick wall, behind which is standing tall the smoke stack, asleep. The loop is complete.

A loop of two realities; two dichotomies.

A sequence of sensations, a great moment of presence.

The Church bell rings again.

It is time to come back.



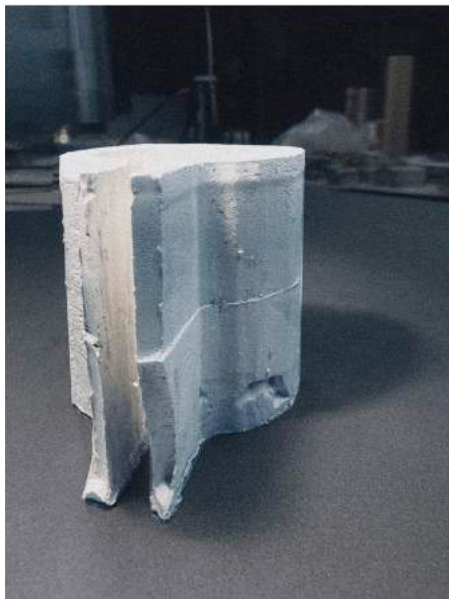








*From image to body*



*We need secrecy and shadow as urgently as we desire to see and to know; the visible and the invisible, the known and what is beyond knowledge, have to obtain a balance. Opacity and secrecy feed the imagination and make one imagine life behind the city's walls.<sup>14</sup>*

## Intuitions

The literary approach has helped me tremendously to materialize the atmosphere attained by the children library. Addressing the right questions becomes meaningful for the anchoring into place of the intervention and thus before walls and windows I had to ask myself how is the light inside, how is the air? What does the building say? Is it proud, mysterious, friendly or melancholic? And so I wrote it down.

*February 28*

*A conversation with the past*

*The driving force of the project acknowledges on one hand that the place projects us outwards to the surroundings, towards Collodi's own exceptionality, with its narrow steep streets, mosaic of windows and cascade of houses, but on the other hand it has to draw us inwards, into its singularity and interiority and thus the space of library itself is autonomous.*

*The intervention has to embrace a wide range of histories, memories, secrets and emotions. The two realities of the place that are found on the two sides of the river are being revealed both in fragments and its totality. A tower, autonomous, oriented inwards into its own exceptionality and with a strong presence, and a museum, projecting us outwards and anchored in the character and tectonic of the vicinities.*

*The entrance of the library has to be present! Going through a door has been proven to have incredible philosophical and metaphysical power. The inside of the tower? Organized around a central pure space and represents a world in itself. It is surrounded by this powerful diffuse light. But the truth is outside and thus the library sends back to Collodi. The contact with the outside world? Minimal, and in-between the books, the small lenses focus the vision, forcing the eye to see, remember and collect memories as opposed to a total transparency that loses its haptic intimacy and makes the eye blind to observation.*

*'The world seen through a window is a tamed and domesticated world. A view through a window has already been given a specific meaning.'*<sup>15</sup>

*...and only one window and Villa Garzoni is celebrated, imprinting in our consciousness strengthening the essential tension between the library and Collodi, the Collodi I experience, the imaginary Collodi and the poetic Collodi.*

*And not to forget, the importance of The Wall.*

*The thinnest, the thickest.*

*And the space in-between, constantly dilating, contracting and assembling a sequence narrow and wide spaces. According to Plato, the wall's primary purpose is to make truth appear, And that is the very definition of beauty. The wall reveals an understanding of freedom. There is no such a thing without limits.*

*'When a wall both raises and reveals limits, when it lasts and acknowledges finitude, it becomes a poetic image... We humans can only understand our true nature through the poetic image... Walls. Real walls that speak to the material imagination, are human walls.'*<sup>16</sup> *At the same time, it is a measure of depth and opacity. The inside of the tower eliminates external noise, turning children to listen to their own being. From the outside it remains mysterious, you cannot fully understand it. And so it invites you in, to fully understand it through the inside and to listen to its own unique silence.*

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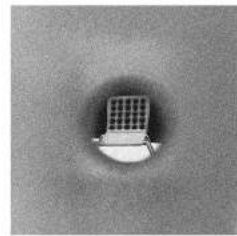
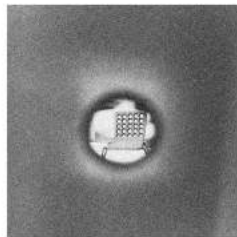
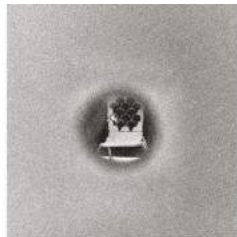
14 Pallasmaa, Juhani ; MacKeith, Peter ; Tullberg, Diana C. ; Wynne-Ellis, Michael. 2005. *Encounters, architectural essays*. Rakennustieto. pp 143

15 Ibid.

16 Alberto Perez Gomez. 2006. *Architecture and its Limits* in MacKeith, Peter; Griffiths, Gareth; Adlercreutz, Gunnel, *Archipelago : essays on architecture : for Juhani Pallasmaa*. Rakennustieto . pp 20

*But when nothing subsists of a distant past, after the death of beings, after the destruction of things, smell, and taste still linger on, alone and more faithful like souls, reminiscing, waiting hoping, on the ruin of all the rest, bearing unflinchingly, on their almost impalpable droplet, the immense edifice of memory.*

Marcel Proust in *Swann's Way*, trans C.K. Scott Moncrieff  
(London: Penguin, 1922)



In a return to place  
Lenses of reality

August 17 2020

I pull the leather handle of the heavy door and walk right inside.

A diffuse light is surrounding me, wrapping the books in mystery. The reality behind is blurred, forcing me to sit down to see the truth outside. In-between the bookshelves the picture is punctured by circles disclosing the reality behind. As I lie by the window my view becomes more focused than ever before. I discover Collodi; a different Collodi. Almost like for the first time.





The church marks its presence with the bell tower rising above the mosaic of roofs.  
A cluster of medieval houses makes the streets disappear. And behind, the Rhododendron garden is guarded by a new presence, right next to the Paper factory. An elongated volume, anchored into place, but at the same time stands out and protects the piazza. The little rhombic windows reflect the rhythms of the factory, but echo a new spirit. They become smaller and smaller until they disappear into the distance.



And far away, a whole new line of houses catches my eye.

Where were they before?

Sequence by sequence, an image of a town I never knew existed: the ethereal Collodi.



Right across the street, the impenetrable forest reveals what has been hiding all this time. The mosaic of attractions make their space in the mass of trees. Paved playgrounds and tiny fountains are animating the excessive number of children that come every summer to see Pinocchio's town.

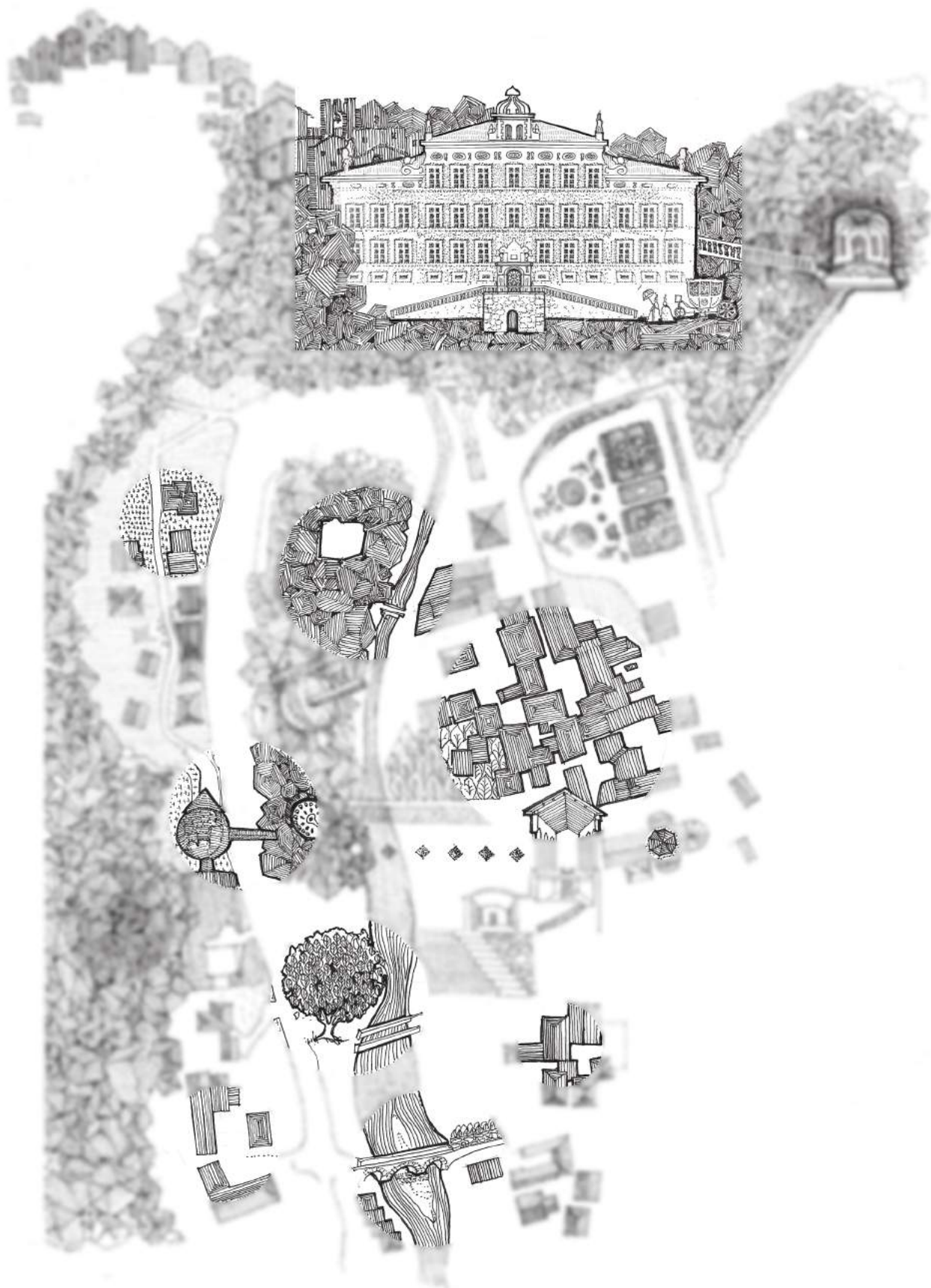




From up here, the river doesn't shout loudly or seem so scary, but almost desultory.  
It just aligns and orders the life of the town.  
And then it dissolves into the hills.  
Within its proximity, the Rhododendron tree stands up taller than ever, surprising the  
street-wanderer with the splendor of its flowers.

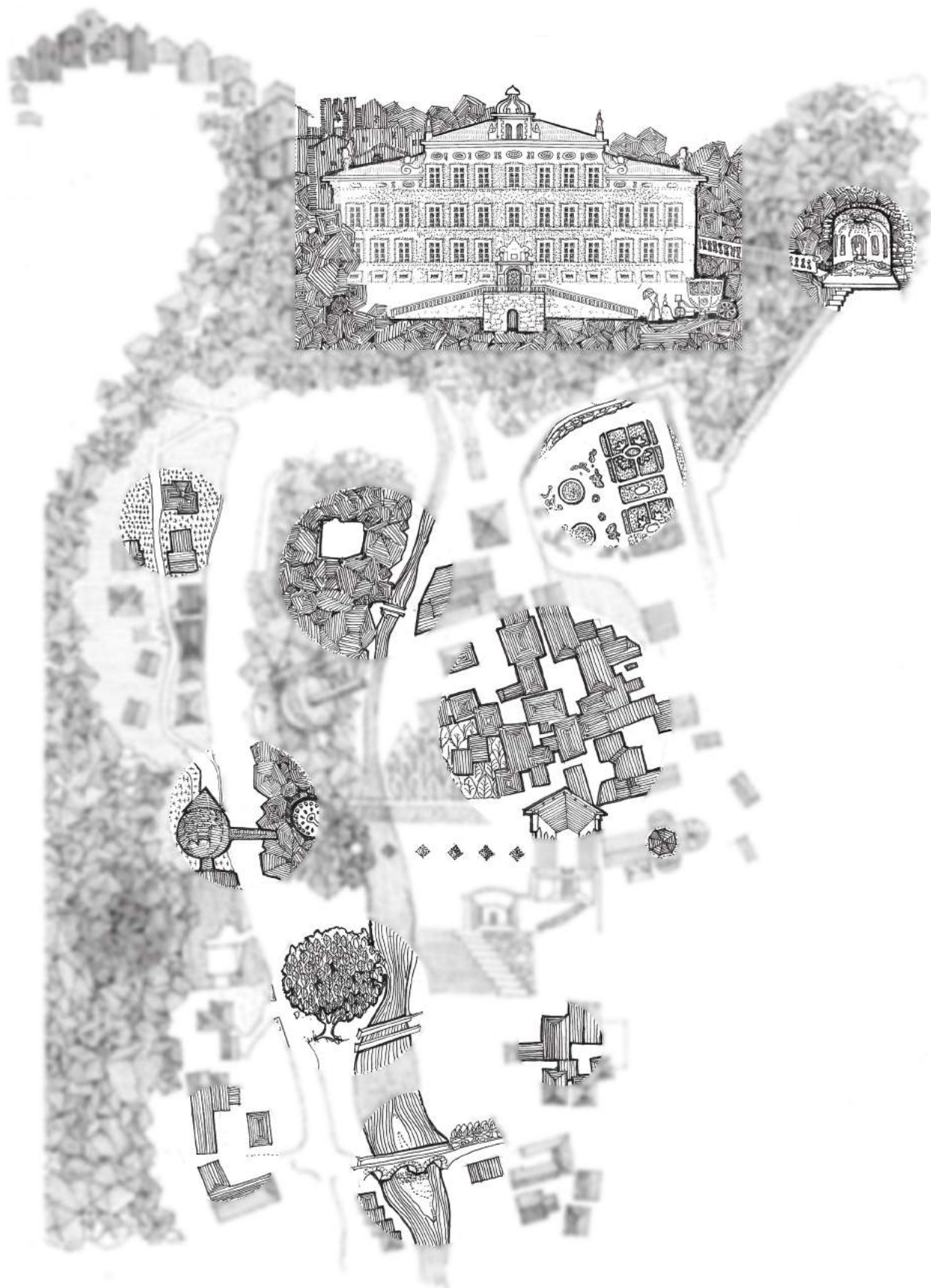


As I walk around, a massive rectangle window, precisely like a brush stroke within the multitude of lenses, frames the monumental Villa Garzoni. In its whole glory, it reveals its victory upon the town. Complete and pure, it makes me shiver.



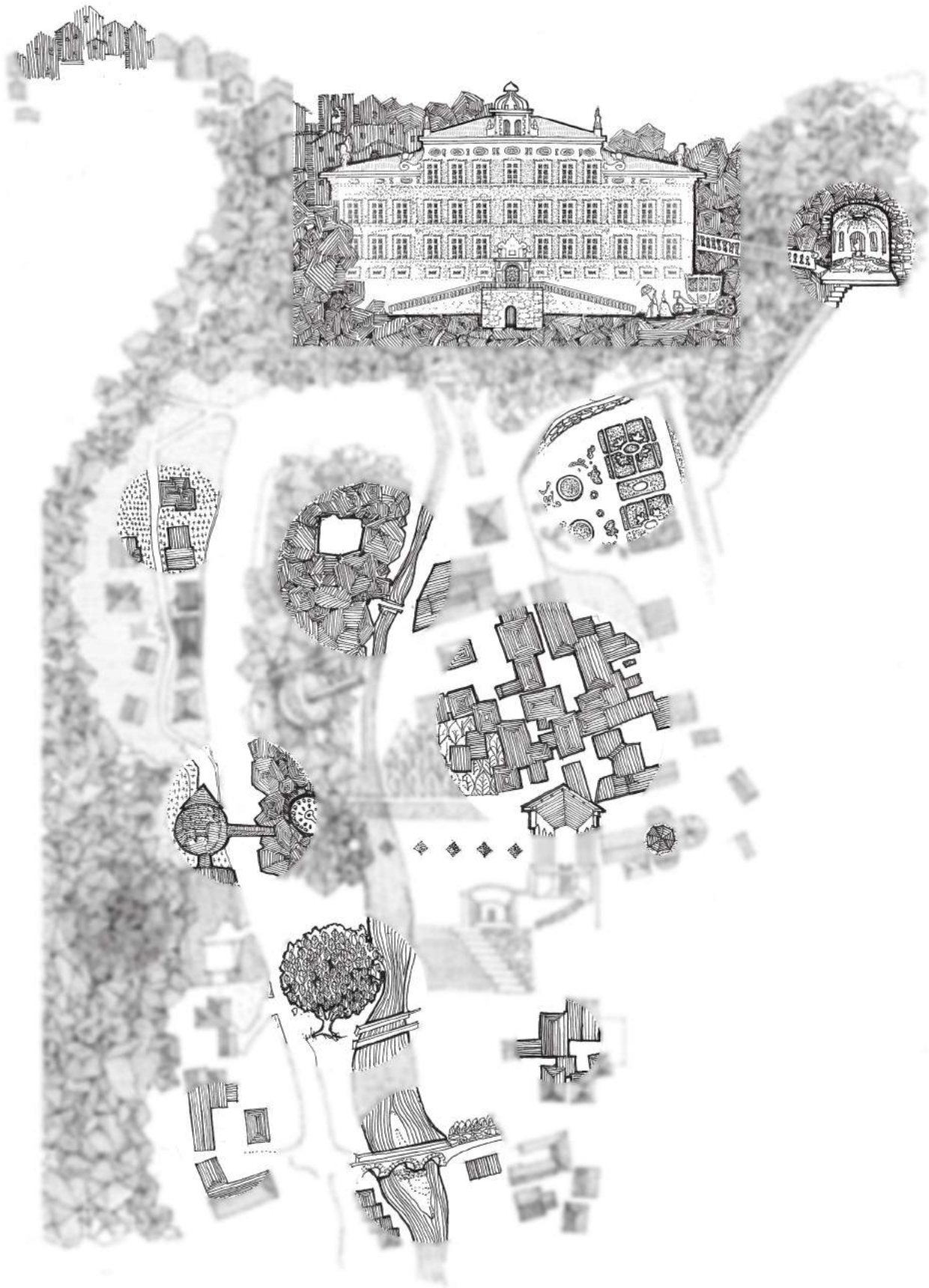
And right at the bottom, the opulent baroque arrangement of marvelous plants. With the glance on the window the mystery of the bridge is revealed.  
All of a sudden I know now where it is leading to; the Grotto: up on the hill, a maze of clarity and opacity.





Behind it, the cascade of houses extends even further, following endlessly the sinuous curve of the hill until it dissipates into the forest.

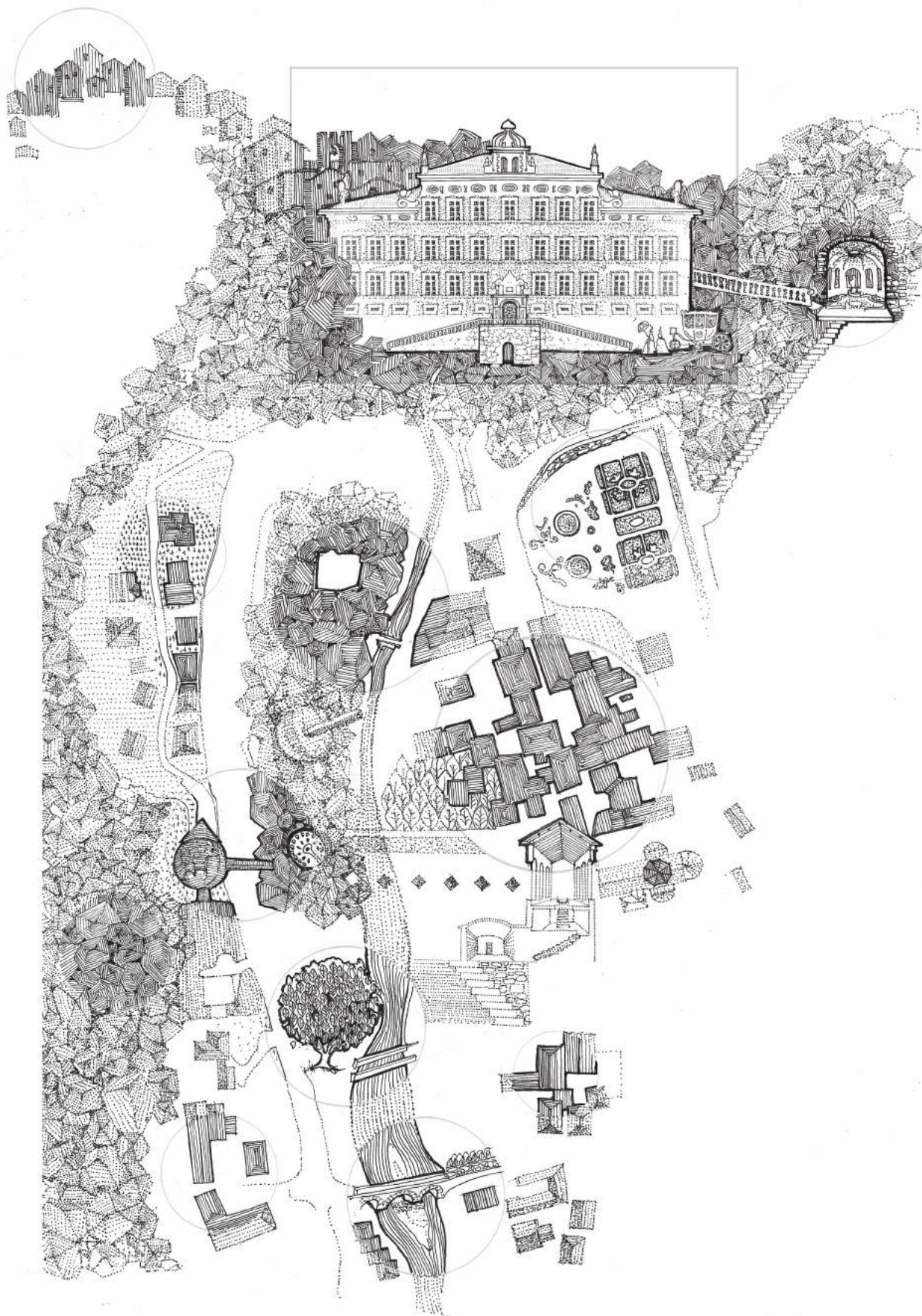
The place discloses an incredible plasticity and becomes an opportunity for dreaming.



I see all the details, like never before.

They were everywhere right in front of me, but at the same time blurred by the total transparency. Now, as I only have a small circle to look through, they all become so vivid, assembling and uncovering another great moment of presence.



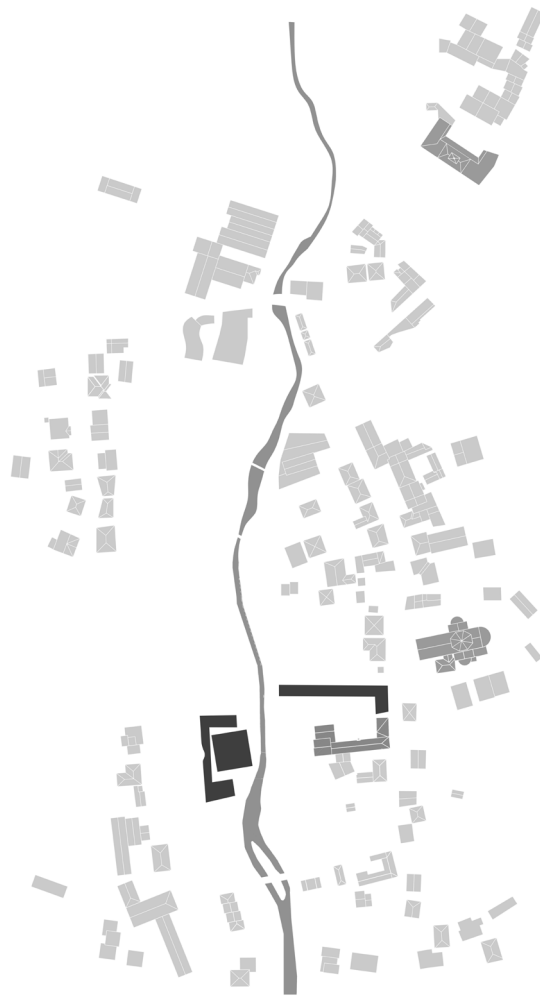








*A repository of stories*



A moment of presence



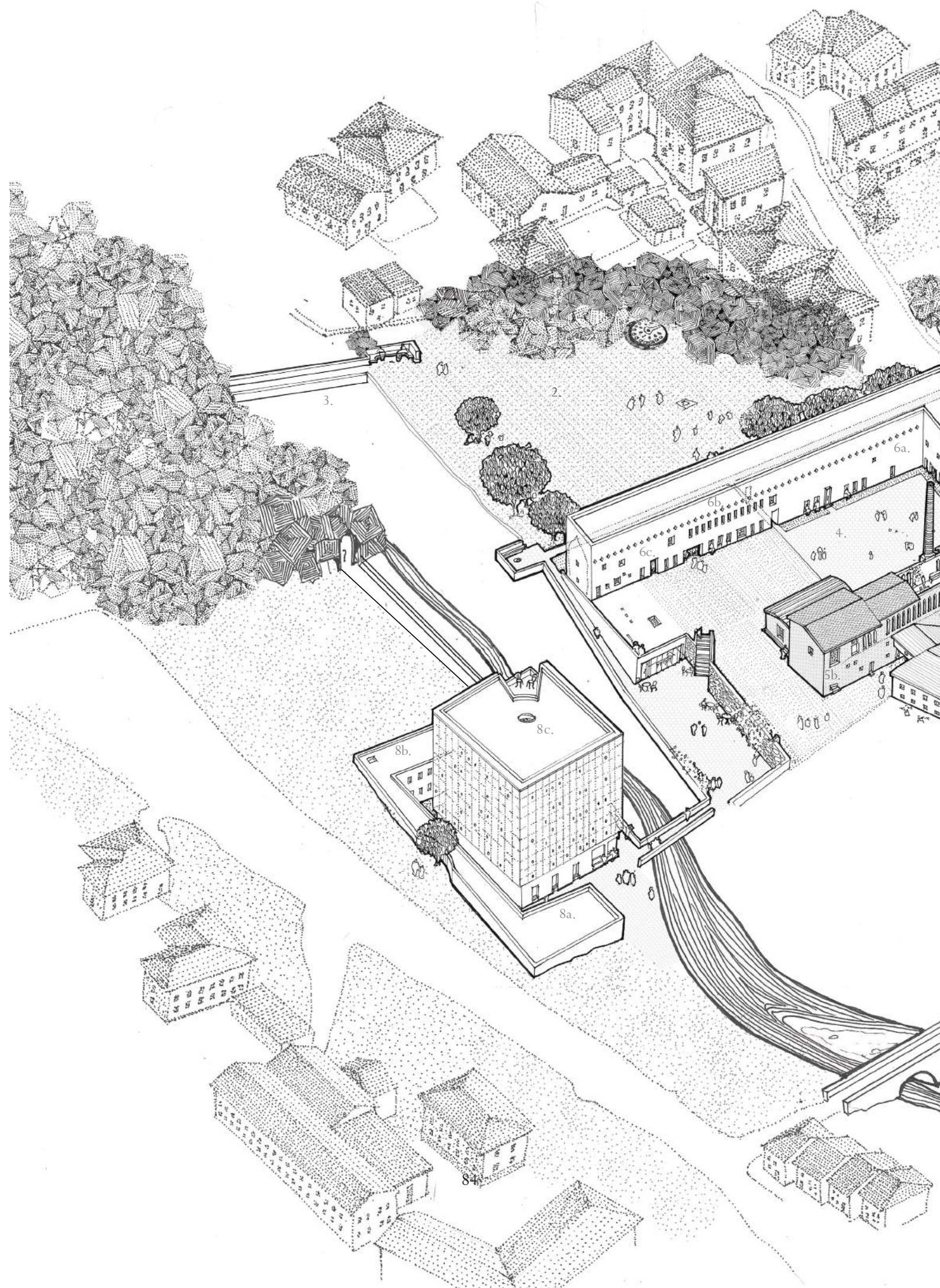
- 1. Church
- 2. Pinocchio Park
- 3. Museum - Existing Paper Factory
- 4. Museum - Extension
- 5. Children Library



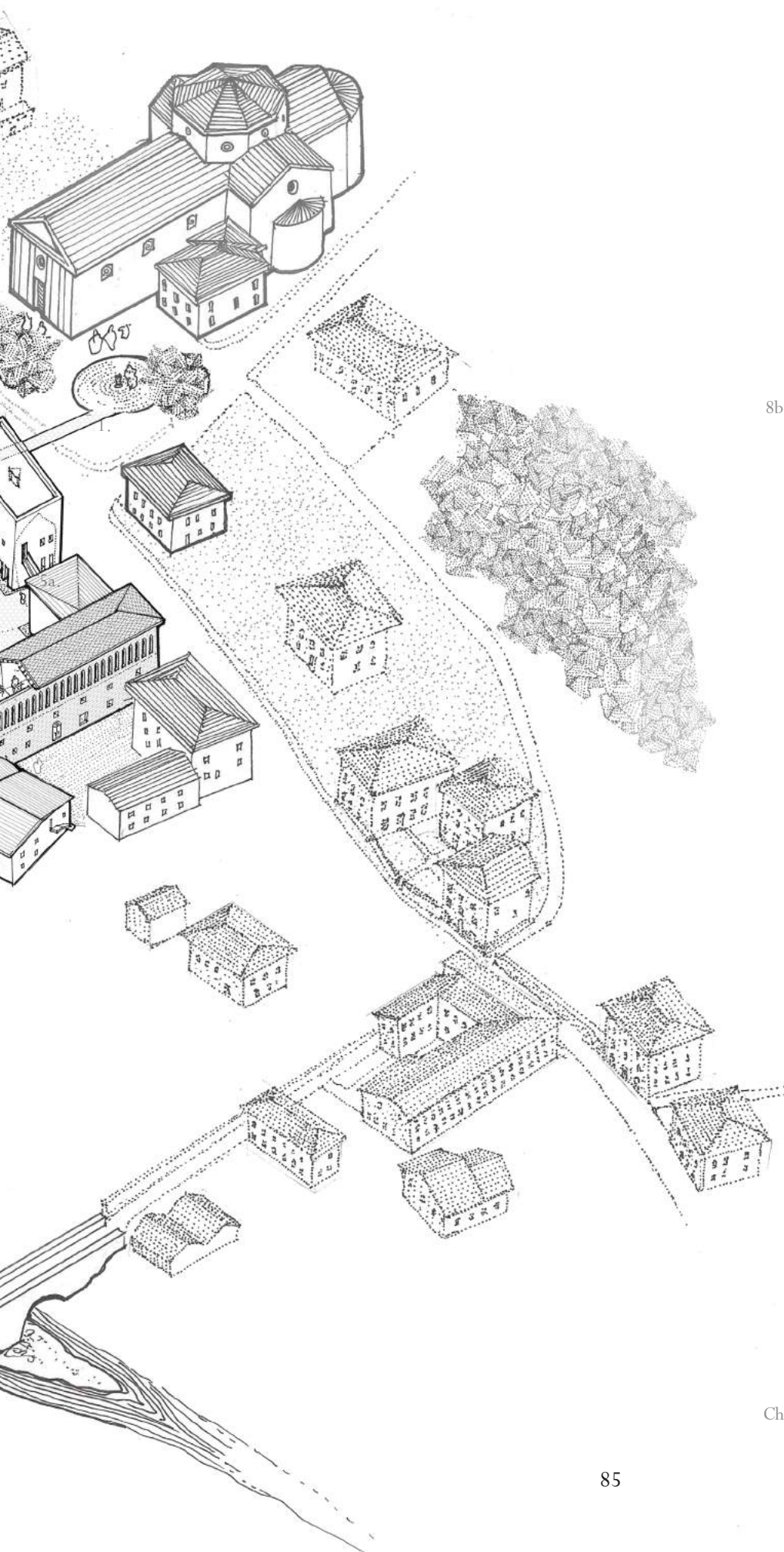
*A child holding 'The Adventures of Pinocchio' in his delicate hands goes to the light.  
The library begins this way.*

Balancing between the reality of things and imagination, the intervention is looking for an architecture of humility, that does not blame to specify action, but to provide an invitation for discovery and emotion. The outcome let it be uncertain, secret, or intriguing with the purpose of creating a moment of presence. It manifests a certain incompleteness as it aims to leave room for the child imagination in one's inner self. It is fastidious in regards to the way the new children library anchors in Collodi, touching not only the physical landscape, the medieval town, but also the inner landscape of a child, of an old man, of any visitor, of myself.









- 1. Church connection
- 2. Rhododendron garden
- 3. Pinocchio Park connection
- 4. Public piazza

- 5. Existing Paper factory- Museum
- 5a. Exhibition area
- 5b. Maintenance facilities and storage

- 6. Museum-extension
- 6a. Exhibition area
- 6b. Personnel facilities
- 6c. Workshop area

- 8. Book tower
- 8a. Auditorium
- 8b. Personnel and maintenance facilities
- 8c. children library

Axonometric view

Museum- 2130 sqm  
Children Library- 3830 sqm



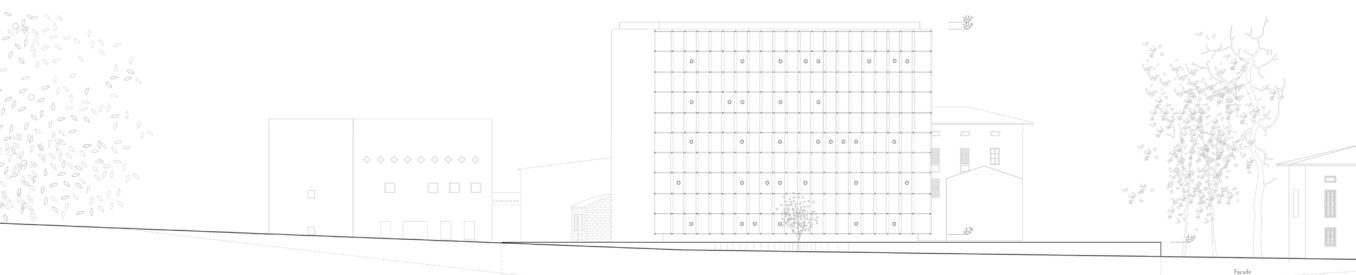


2 pm

An architecture of *fragile image*...

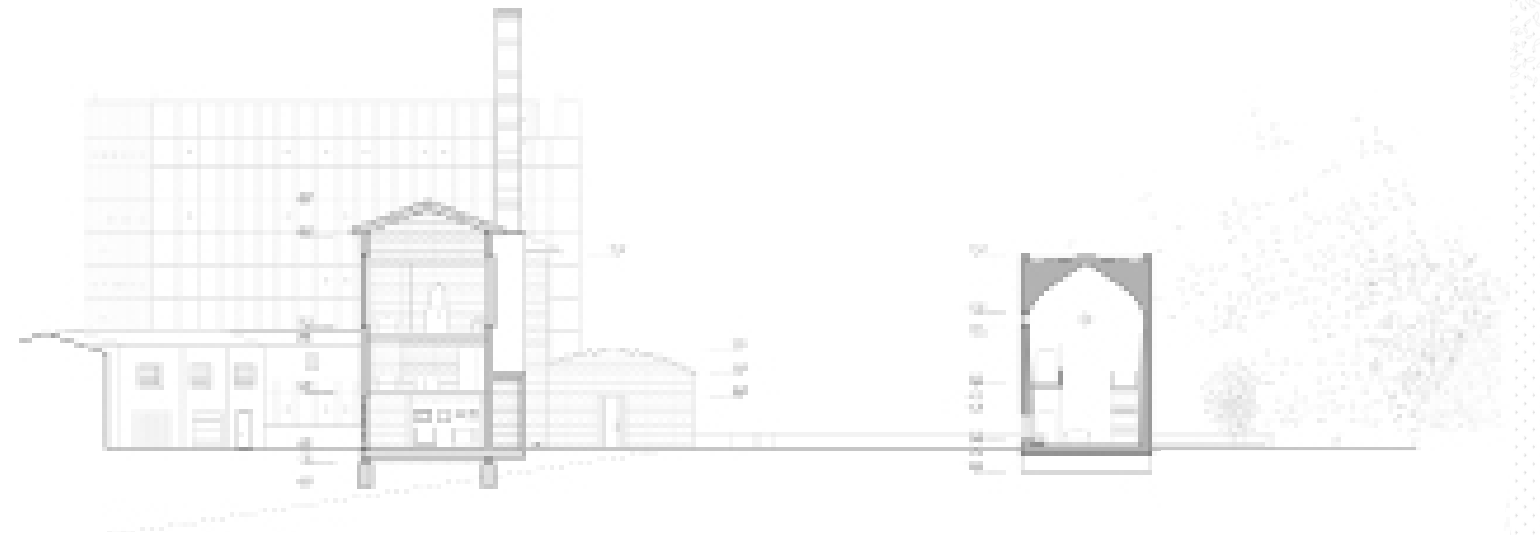
...that reveals progressively through a sequence of atmospheres.

The approach comes gradually and narrow spaces between the medieval houses reveal fragments of a new presence, the library. Glimpses are building an image of a building that will be completed only after experiencing the places that foresee it: the piazza (1), the museum (2) and the Rhododendron garden (3). The existing church misses the important public space in front of it and the intervention is trying to recover it, organizing the adjacent buildings around a mineral piazza. The new alleyway (4) leads you from the church and invites you to discover the ensemble of the Rhododendron garden, piazza and the Pinocchio park (5).







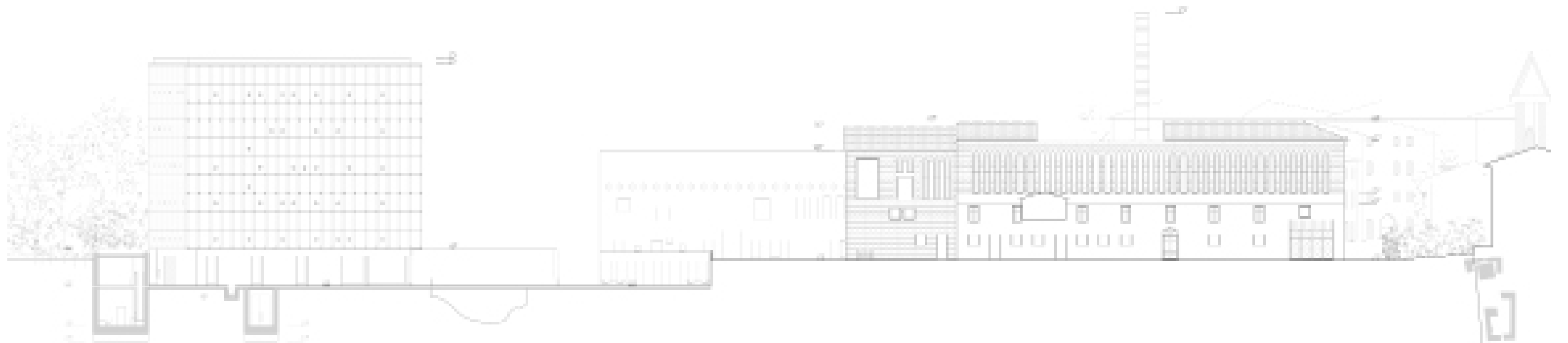


The intervention is important not in its form, but in the inversion of it. It organizes two places of different atmospheres, divided but at the same time very much connected: a central paved piazza and a Rhododendron garden.

Right in front, the Church has regained its place to stay and rest for a while and slowly the path leads you into the heart of everything.

As you arrive in the piazza, the library is revealed in its totality. A place to gather, a place where kids play, closely connected with the church and the garden in their proximity. Two realities are creating a sequence: the public ordered piazza in contrast with the natural garden, now as it was then, before.

The museum is taking over the existent Paper Factory, regenerating the space from within, but at the same time leaving the marks of its history visible, as part of the exhibition along with the Pinocchio collection. The entrance is taking over the vaulted room adjacent to the factory as the arched ceiling gives it a certain presence, opulence and beauty. The new becomes visible through the materiality of the joints and simple cut details of the doors.



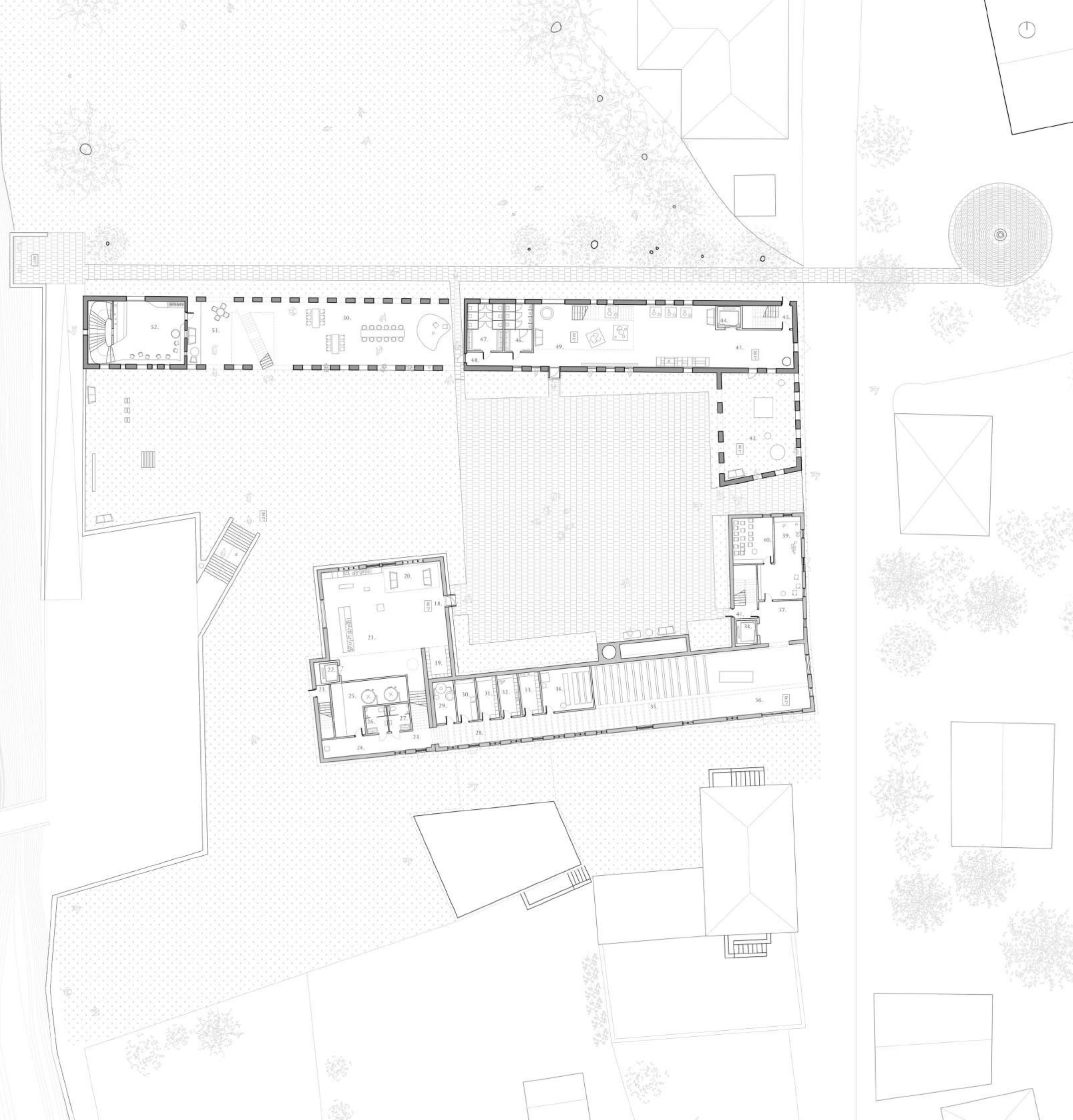


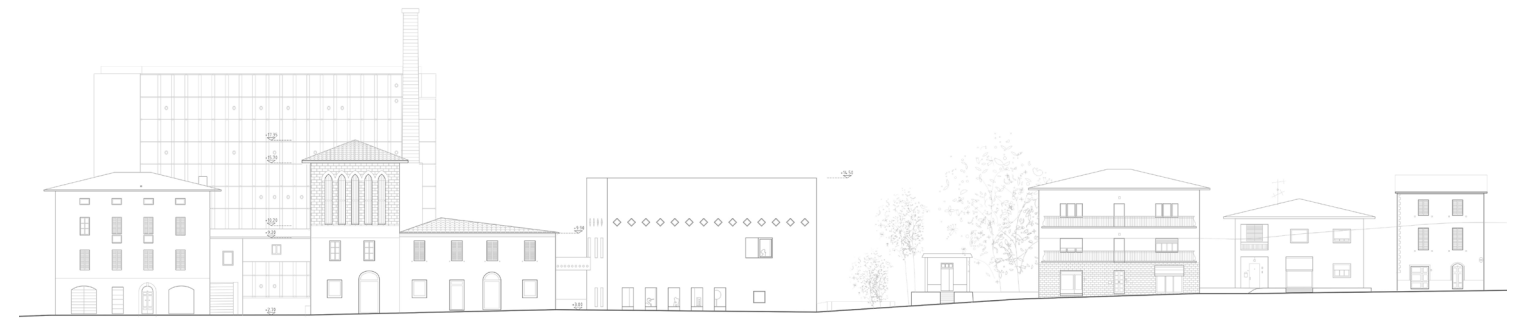
MUSEUM  
EXTENSION  
1st floor plan

42. OUTDOOR EXHIBITION A=85sqm  
43. TEMPORARY EXHIBITION  
A=170sqm  
44. ELEVATOR  
45. EMERGENCY EXIT  
46. SANITARY A=16sqm  
47. SANITARY A=20sqm  
48. EXIT AREA  
49. EXIT AREA  
50. OUTSIDE WORKSHOP SPACE A=138sqm  
51. CAFETERIA TERRACE A=37sqm  
52. CAFETERIA A=52sqm

MUSEUM  
EXISTING PAPER FACTORY  
1st floor

18. ENTRANCE  
19. CLOAKROOM A=9sqm  
20. RESTING AREA A=18sqm  
21. LOBBY AND TICKET BOOTH 122sqm  
22. ELEVATOR  
23. EMERGENCY EXIT  
24. CORRIDOR A=24sqm  
25. HEATING ROOM A=33sqm  
26. SANITARY A=7sqm  
27. SANITARY A=7sqm  
28. CORRIDOR A=39sqm  
29. ELECTRICAL ROOM A=10sqm  
30. CLEANING CENTRE A=10sqm  
31. TOOLS STORAGE A=10sqm  
32. PACKING MATERIALS STORAGE A=10sqm  
33. MUSEUM TECHNIQUES STORAGE  
A=10sqm  
34. TEMPORARY EXHIBITION STORAGE A=26  
sqm  
35. PERMANENT EXHIBITION STORAGE  
A=88sqm  
36. ARTWORK RECEPTION A=77sqm  
37. CIRCULATION A=21sqm  
38. ELEVATOR  
39. FACILITIES STORAGE A=33sqm  
40. FURNITURE STORAGE A=22sqm

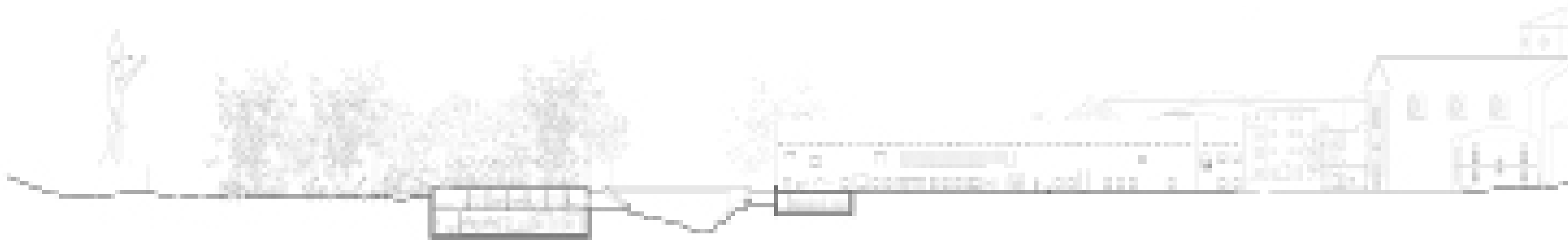




*At dawn*

The old windows of the factory reveal the reality of the street, but once you cross the bridge, the reality is turned towards the piazza, assuming a firm visual distance in its relationship with the nearby house. And suddenly: one square frame picturing the eternal Church and the people coming to see the liturgy every Sunday.

The museum extension sends outside as its limits are containing within sitting places and its thick walls are taking part in the life of the piazza, the life of the garden. Its opacity becomes an instrument of secrecy and feeds the imagination as the inner child can create an imaginary world of what happens beyond the wall. The light going through the windows echoes the rhythms of the Paper factory on the bent wall. Mysterious, but exciting.



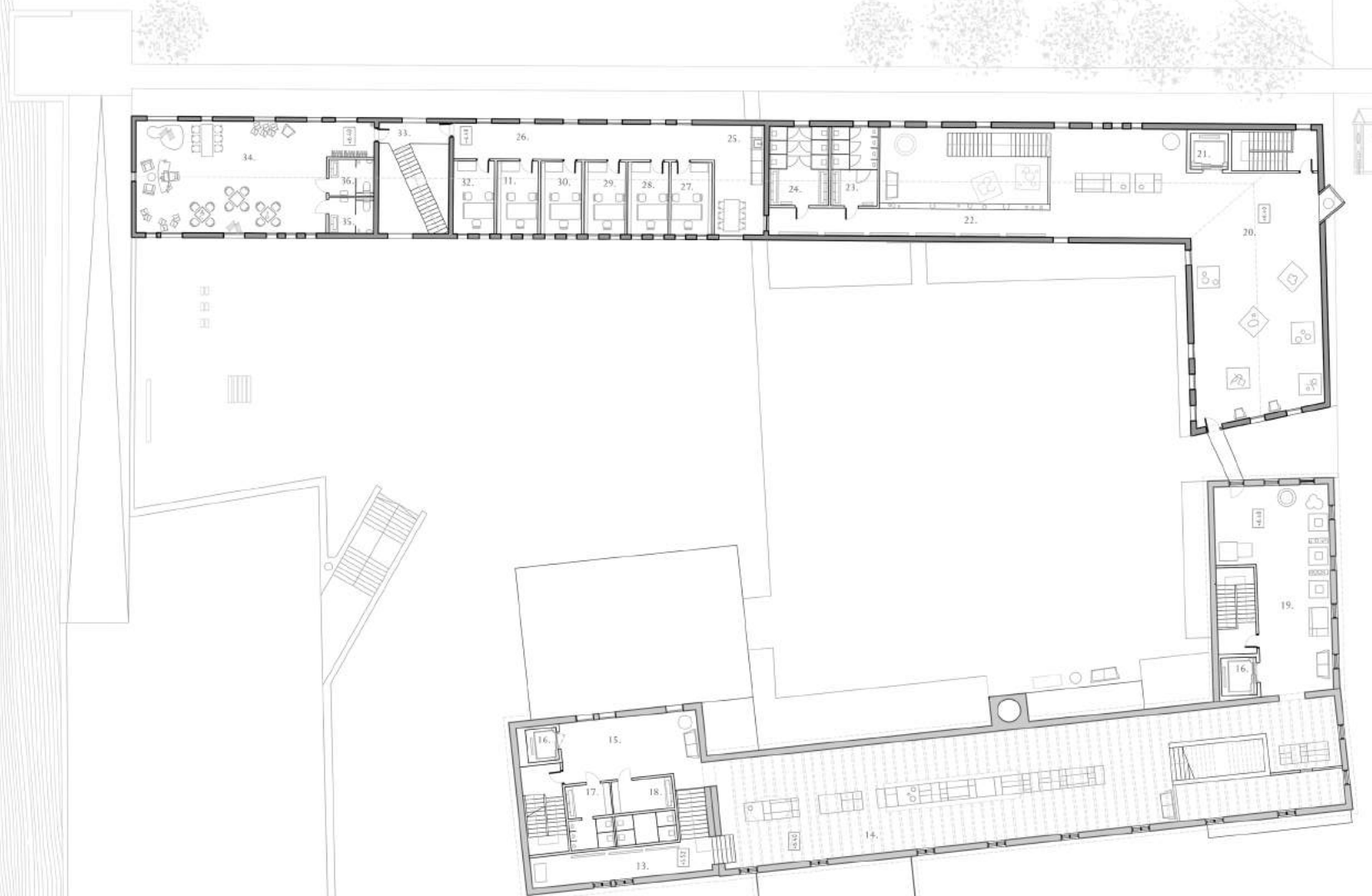


MUSEUM  
2nd floor plan

- EXISTING PAPER FACTORY  
13. EXHIBITION AREA A=21sqm  
14. EXHIBITION AREA A=230sqm  
15. RESTING AREA A=25sqm  
16. ELEVATOR  
17. SANITARY A=12sqm  
18. SANITARY A=15sqm  
19. EXHIBITION AREA A=77sqm

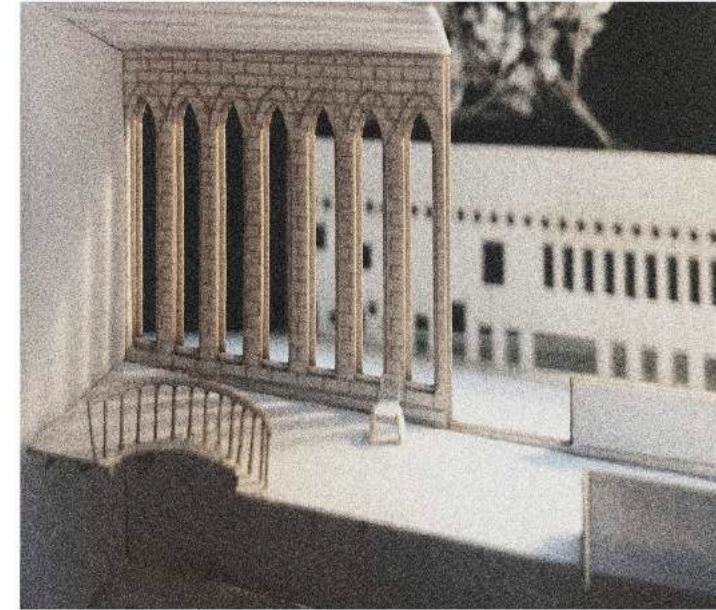
MUSEUM  
EXTENSION  
2nd floor

20. PERMANENT EXHIBITION A=212sqm  
21. ELEVATOR  
22. CORRIDOR  
23. SANITARY A=15sqm  
24. SANITARY A=20sqm  
25. PERSONNEL FACILITIES-BREAK ROOM A=23sqm  
26. CORRIDOR A=38sqm  
27. OFFICE A=13sqm  
28. OFFICE A=13sqm  
29. OFFICE A=13sqm  
30. OFFICE A=13sqm  
31. OFFICE A=13sqm  
32. OFFICE A=13sqm  
33. CIRCULATION  
34. WORKSHOP ROOM A=95sqm  
35. SANITARY A=7sqm  
36. SANITARY A=7sqm



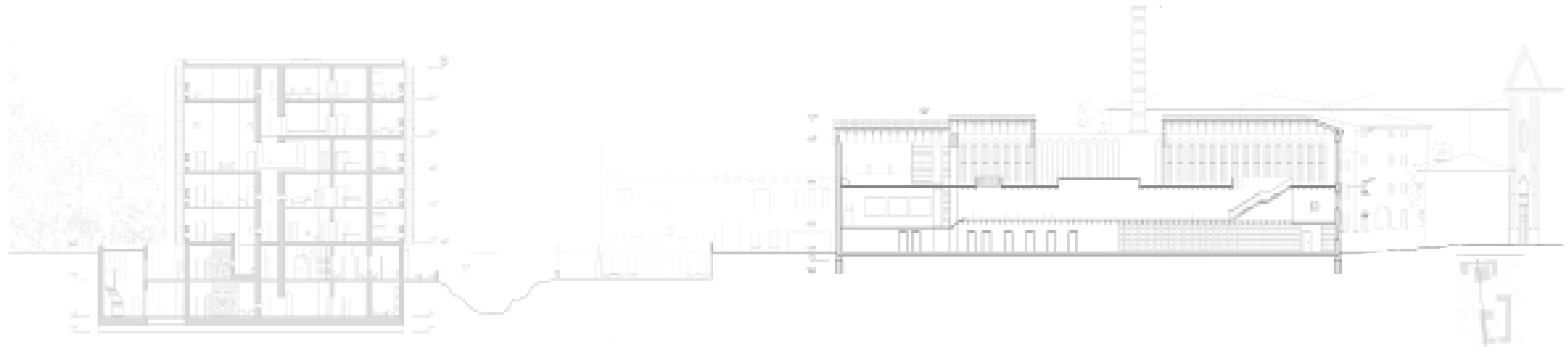


*In the still of the night*



*5pm, before the museum closes*

The last floor of the existent Paper Factory reveals the glory of its roof. The carpentry and the structure of beams become the ornament. Long narrow windows rhythm the space and project the visitor towards the surroundings. The longitude of the hall is broken down by voids in the wooden floors and right in the middle of everything, preserving its history, the roof 'breaks' and the vibrant walls protect an outdoor exhibition.





MUSEUM  
3rd floor plan

EXISTING PAPER FACTORY  
13. EXHIBITION AREA A=111sqm  
14. OUTDOOR EXHIBITION AREA  
A=95sqm  
15. EXHIBITION AREA A=57sqm  
16. RESTING AREA A=53sqm  
17. CIRCULATION A=25sqm  
18. ELEVATOR  
19. SANITARY A=7sqm  
20. SANITARY A=7sqm





*Sunrise*



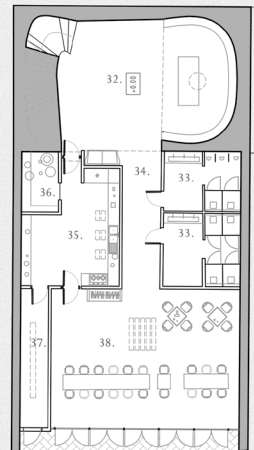
*On a Monday afternoon*

The approach towards the library comes gradually. The public stairs become an invitation to stop and sit, filtering the space through a sequence of narrow, wide, low and high. Linked by the bridge, the space in front of the tower is recovered on the other side of the river, turning into a reading terrace. Peeks of the life underneath the tower are revealed through the small courtyard. The transportation of the books from the tower to the adjacent storage is surfacing in the public outside space, making the secret life of the library visible through the books elevator that is animating the space.



# 1st floor plan

1. AUDITORIUM A=240sqm
2. EXIT AREA A=29sqm
3. LOBBY
4. BOOK ELEVATOR
5. LOADING AND SORTING ROOM A=37sqm
6. ENTRANCE AREA A=49sqm
7. SANITARY A=8sqm
8. SANITARY A=8sqm
9. SANITARY A=8sqm
10. SOCIAL FACILITIES WOMEN A=17sqm
11. SOCIAL FACILITIES MEN A=17sqm
12. NEGOTIATION ROOM A=22sqm
13. CIRCULATION A=75sqm
14. OFFICE A=15sqm
15. OFFICE A=15sqm
16. OFFICE A=15sqm
17. OFFICE A=15sqm
18. OFFICE A=15sqm
19. LIBRARY DIRECTOR OFFICE A=22sqm
20. EXIT AREA A=5sqm



## BOOK TOWER

21. ENTRANCE AND INFO CENTER A=63sqm
22. CENTRAL LOBBY A=65sqm
23. CHECK-IN MACHINE
24. CLOAKROOM A=30sqm
25. CHECK-OUT MACHINE
26. SHORT-TERM STORAGE FOR RETURNED BOOKS A=39sqm
27. ELEVATOR
28. RESTING AREA A=53sqm
29. EXIT AREA A=15sqm
30. STAFF ENTRANCE AREA A=49sqm
31. BOOKS ELEVATOR

## CAFETERIA

32. LOBBY A=57sqm
33. SANITARY-WOMEN A=16sqm, MEN A=14sqm
34. CORRIDOR A=16sqm
35. KITCHEN A=30sqm
36. STORAGE A=7sqm
37. PERSONNEL ENTRANCE A=11sqm
38. CAFE A=74sqm
38. TERRACE



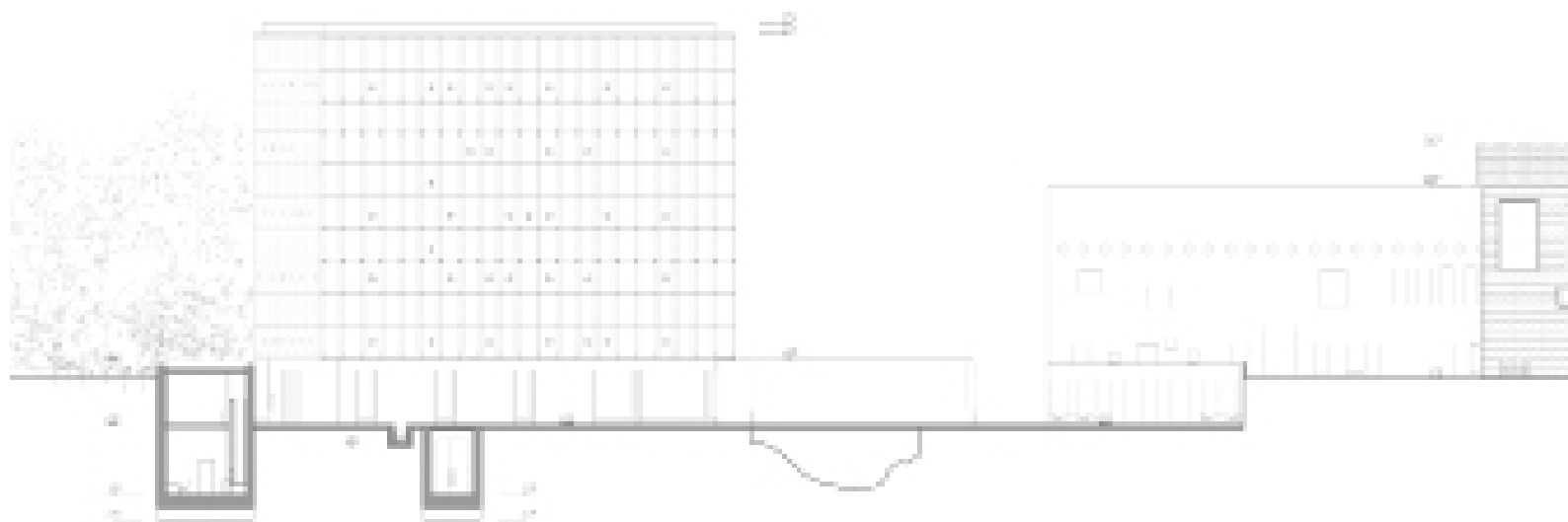


*In the still of the night*

*It becomes a place embedded in visitors' lives, but in which visitors' lives are themselves embedded.*

In contrast with all the functions that project us outwards, towards the place, the book tower draws us *inwards*, it doesn't reveal itself to the street.

Instead, it *pulses*, drawing shadows during the day and diffuse light at night. The spatial configuration changes the perception so that the square is never perceived from the inside. As you open the door of the library, you enter another world, hidden from everything else outside. So different in presence, but similar with the museum through the detailing of the joints: the heaviness of the doorhandles or the warmth of the sitting places. The tectonic of the first floor strongly anchors the library, as if it was born through the ground and the thick wall embraces the Rhododendron almost like protecting it.

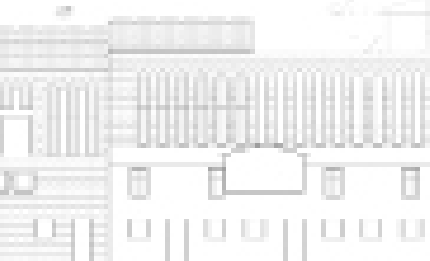


## Underground floor plan

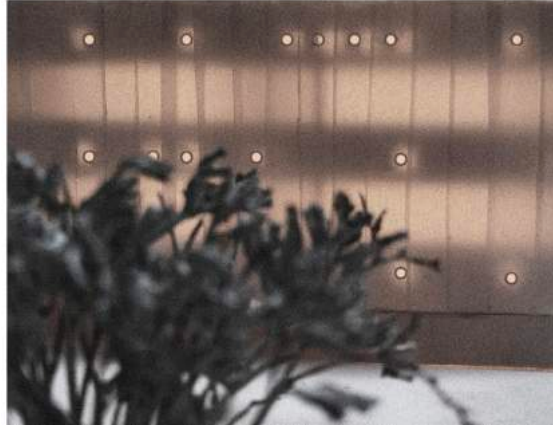
1. AUDITORIUM A=240sqm
2. STORAGE WITH COMPACT BOOKSHELVES A=85sqm
3. PRELIMINARY READING ROOM A=42sqm
4. BOOK ELEVATOR
5. ENTRANCE LOBBY A=48sqm
6. CLEANING CENTRE A=20sqm
7. FACILITIES STORAGE SPACE A=20sqm
8. ELECTRICAL ROOM A=11sqm
9. HEATING ROOM A=33sqm
10. VENTILATION MACHINERY A=160sqm

## BOOKTOWER

11. EXTERIOR COURTYARD A=92sqm
12. PHOTOCOPYING AND STORAGE A=57sqm
13. LOBBY-ARRIVAL A=65sqm
14. FOYER A=68sqm
15. SANITARY A=30sqm
16. VR ROOM A=66sqm
17. VR ROOM A=32sqm
18. VR ROOM A=35sqm
19. EXIT AREA A=22sqm
20. CIRCULATION A=56sqm
21. ELEVATOR



*It pulses*

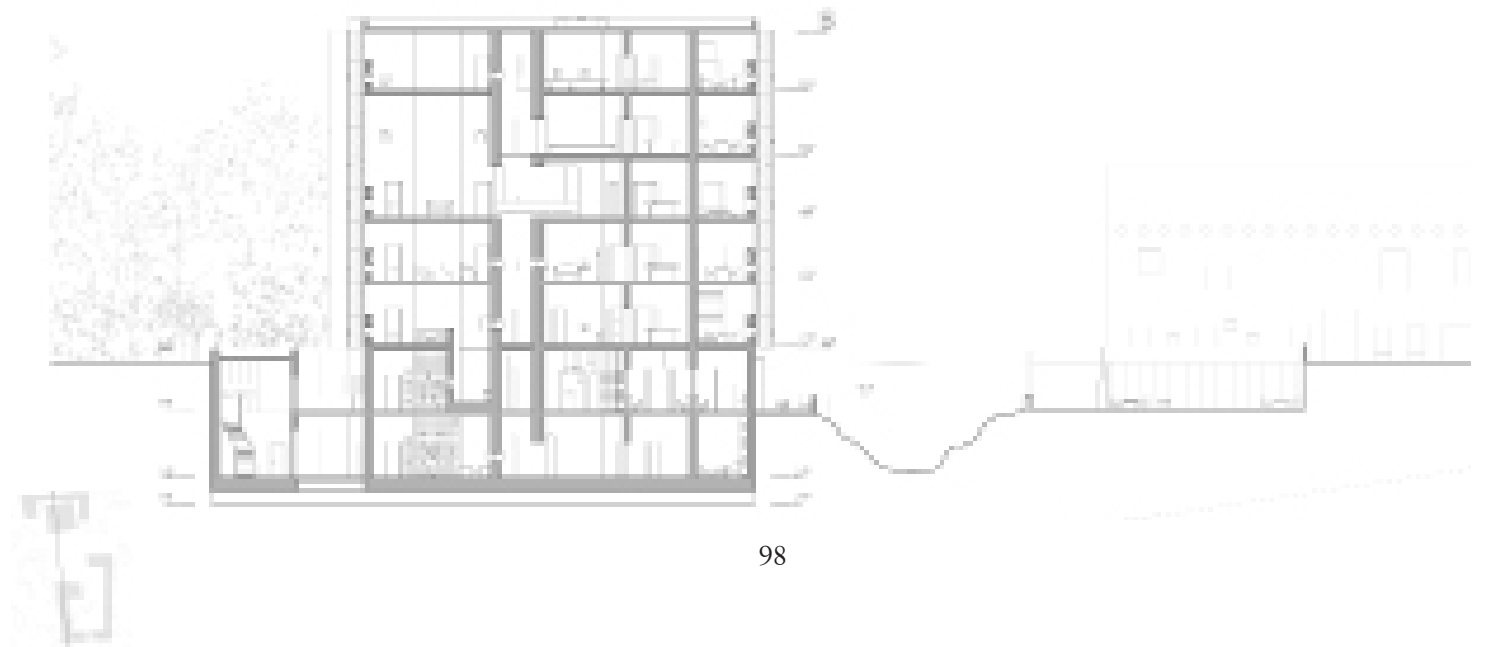


*A cold day of winter*

From the outside, a square, expression of earthbound static materialism, the body and reality. The inside, an unusual assemblage and sequence of the narrow and the wide, the dark and the light. The upper floors are wrapped in a membrane that makes the light fade and the whole reality curve. Daylight hits the etched glass.

With its own interior logic and spatial configuration, responding to the exigency of the program and atmosphere attained.

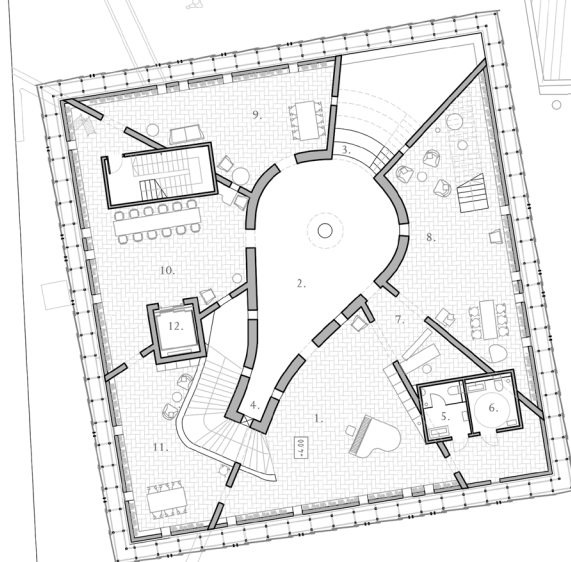
The amphitheater-like shape creates an image of children being together and the sequence of unusual rooms that are surrounding the core shadow traces of labyrinthine dreams.



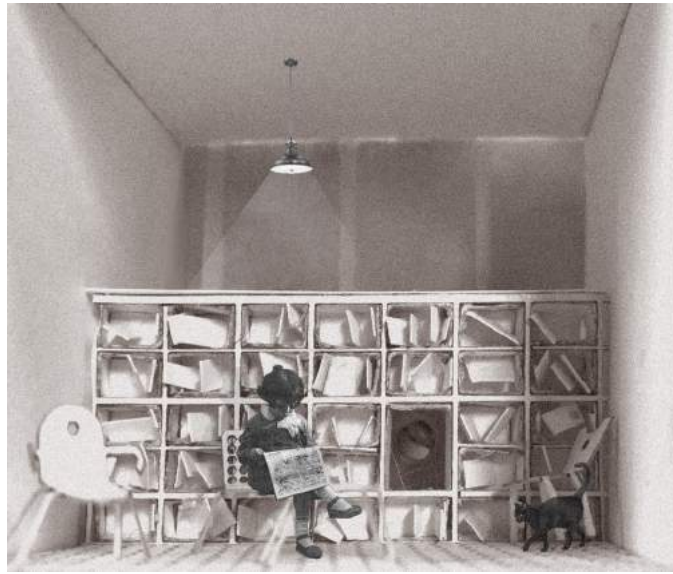
## BOOK TOWER

### 1st floor plan

1. READING ROOM A=76sqm
2. ATRIUM A=65sqm
3. SITTING PLACE A=3sqm
4. BOOKS ELEVATOR
5. SANITARY A=7sqm
6. SANITARY A=7sqm
7. SUPERVISOR POST A=13sqm
8. READING ROOM A=74sqm
9. READING ROOM A=49sqm
10. READING ROOM A=62sqm
11. READING ROOM A=61sqm
12. ELEVATOR







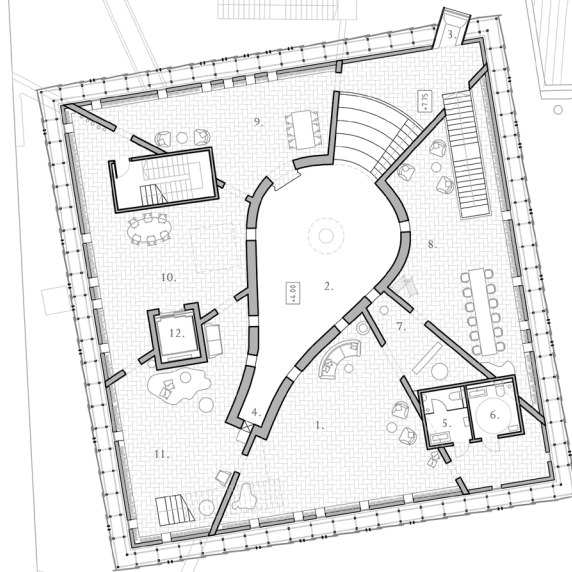
*Late night reading*

The proximity of the bookshelves inside vibrates and spreads glimpses and right in-between, sitting places revealing fragments of the reality outside, more focused than ever, and in that way imprinting into one's memory.



BOOK TOWER  
2nd floor plan

1. READING ROOM A=76sqm
2. ATRIUM A=65sqm
3. SITTING PLACE A=3sqm
4. BOOKS ELEVATOR
5. SANITARY WOMEN A=17sqm
6. SANITARY MEN A=13sqm
7. SUPERVISOR POST A=15sqm
8. READING ROOM A=74sqm
9. READING ROOM A=49sqm
10. READING ROOM A=62sqm
11. READING ROOM A=61sqm
12. ELEVATOR





*May 12*

*It dilates and contracts*

*The core*

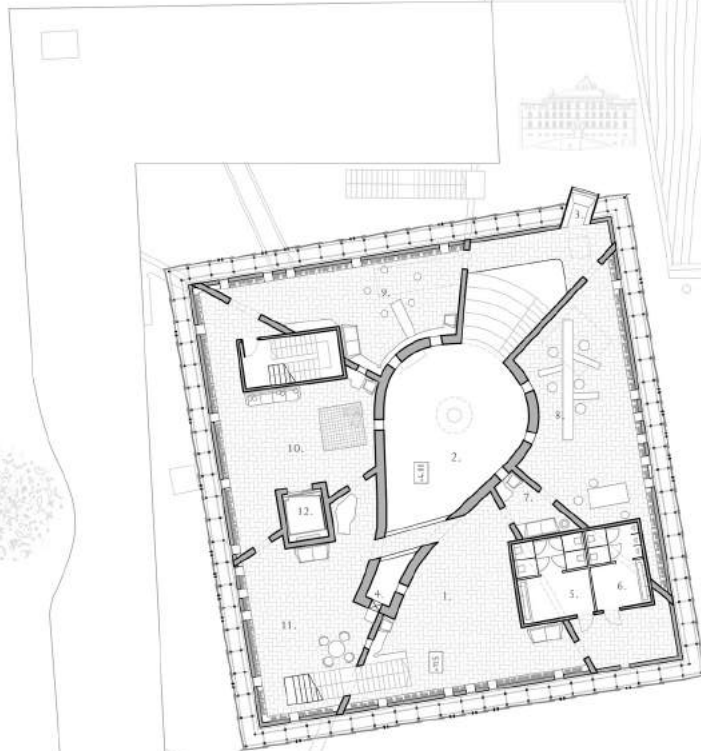
A bent wall.

Oriented inwards, as symbol of the self, expressing all the dimensions of the psyche. Thick as it can be. What matters is not the outer form but the inversion of the shape, the emptiness that spreads and vibrates within.

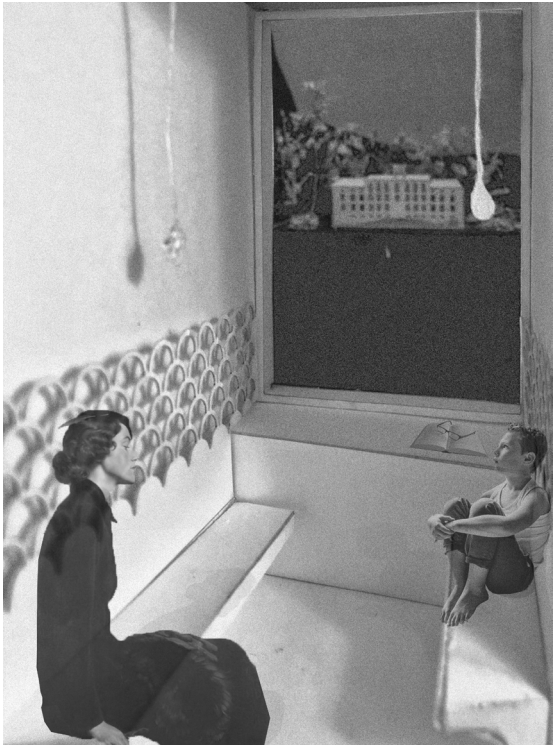
A space that constantly dilates and contracts, the children library comes as an externalization of our memories, of our imagination.

BOOK TOWER  
3rd floor plan

1. READING ROOM A=76sqm
2. ATRIUM A=65sqm
3. SITTING PLACE A=3sqm
4. BOOKS ELEVATOR
5. SANITARY WOMEN A=17sqm
6. SANITARY MEN A=13sqm
7. SUPERVISOR POST A=15sqm
8. READING ROOM A=74sqm
9. READING ROOM A=49sqm
10. READING ROOM A=62sqm
11. READING ROOM A=61sqm
12. ELEVATOR







*Evening glance*



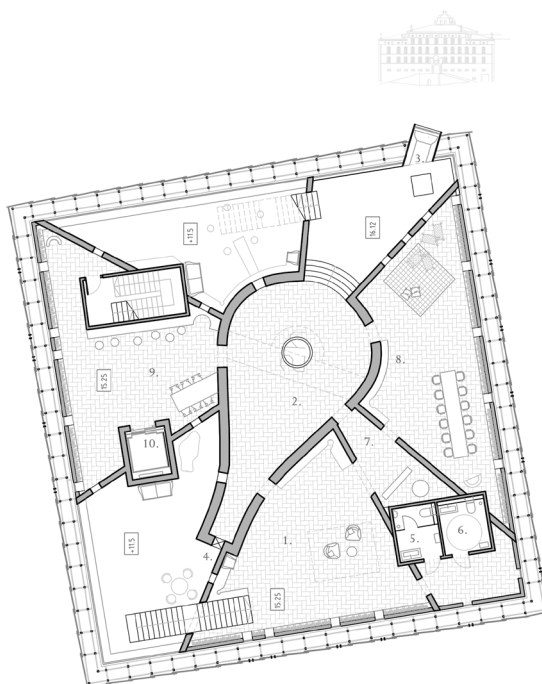
Collodi's balconies

And like a brush stroke, one window.  
One window only, framing Villa Garzoni and revealing its splendor.



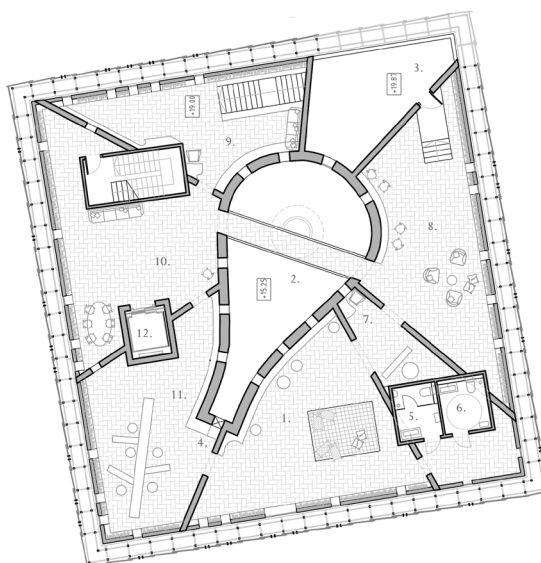
BOOKTOWER  
4 th floor plan

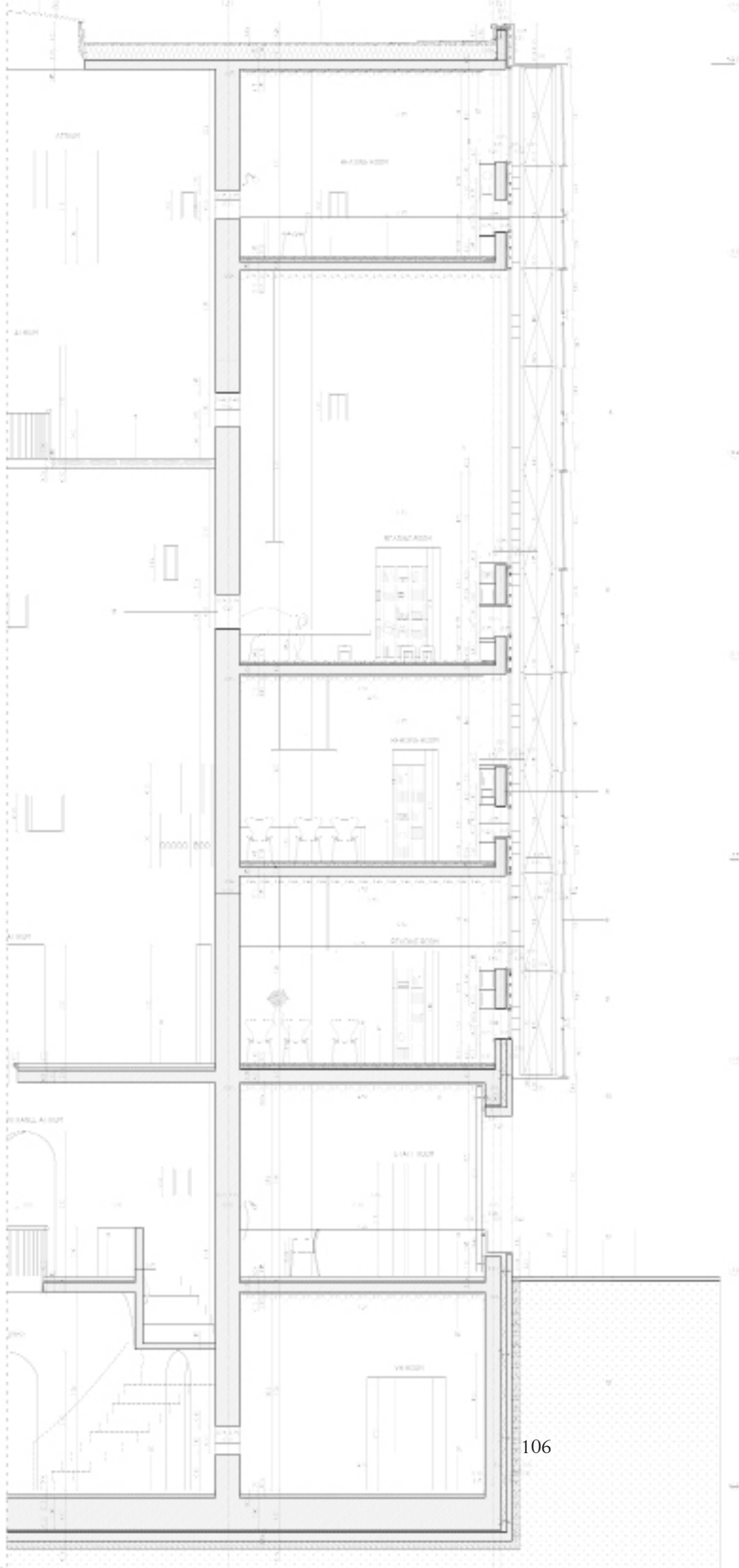
- 1.READING ROOM A=76sqm
- 2.ATRIUM A=65sqm
- 3.SITTING PLACE A=3sqm
- 4.BOOKS ELEVATOR
- 5.SANITARY A=7sqm
- 6.SANITARY A=sqm
- 7.SUPERVISOR POST A=15sqm
- 8.READING ROOM A=74sqm
- 9.READING ROOM A=62sqm
- 10.ELEVATOR

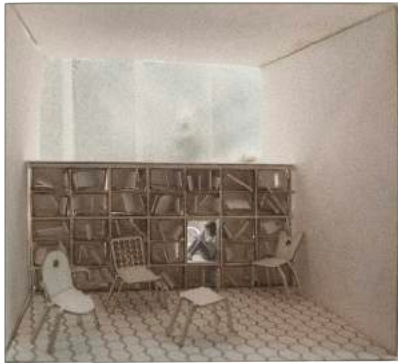


BOOKTOWER  
5th floor plan

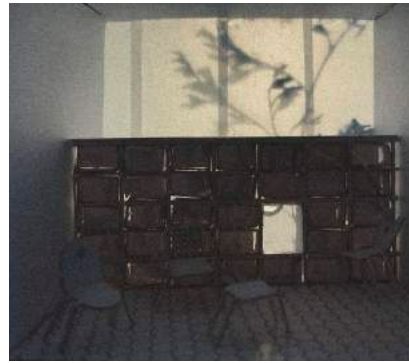
- 1.READING ROOM A=76sqm
- 2.ATRIUM A= 65sqm
- 3.OUTSIDE TERRACE A=36sqm
- 4.BOOKS ELEVATOR
- 5.SANITARY A=7sqm
- 6.SANITARY A=7sqm
- 7.SUPERVISOR POST A=15sqm
- 8.READING ROOM A=74sqm
- 9.READING ROOM A=49sqm
- 10.READING ROOM A=62sqm
- 11.READING ROOM A=61sqm
- 12.ELEVATOR



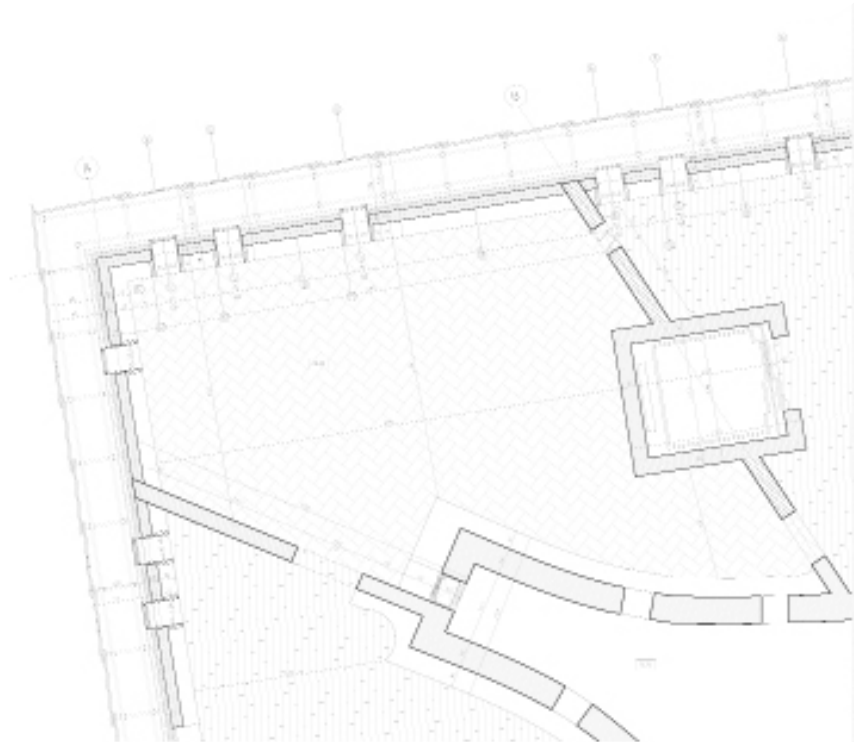




*Early mornings*



*After everyone left*





*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets ( “ Little Gidding ” )

## Finale

### A touching sight

I want to address that the conclusion for this paper is not an end, but a new beginning, leaving the reader with an awareness of the presence of places and abundance of atmospheres that are encompassed within a place. The sole purpose of this album rather than dealing with the extra-ordinary, is revealing the plain and simple outrageousness of the ordinary, but through a sensitive sight that makes it remarkable. At the arrival, it undertakes the prescription of a scenario with the desire of creating a moment of presence.

Thus I hope that it formulated questions rather than definite answers and showed the story of a building filtered through the honest and careful eye: a touching sight.

The first part presented, *Theory*, has made me first of all understand the complexity of *place* and moments of *presence* that I have encountered throughout my life and built the framework of my work, within my thoughts and what you see here as being the outcome of this thought process. Rooted in a phenomenological approach, the design desires to tackle an approach sensitive to the place and to its characters.

I want to highlight that the children library wouldn't have been possible without a thorough analysis of the life embedded in the medieval Collodi. Feeling the rhythms of the place, its characters patterns and movements, the possibilities it enables in order to understand what it imposes. I remember while encountering the place for the first time being all of a sudden incredibly surprised and other times quite frustrated and thus I found it compelling how such a small place can deliver such a broad spectrum of sensations. Observation lead to intuitions; intuitions that were seeking for an atmospheric richness, acknowledging habits and framing them in new settings with appropriate atmospheres. In regards to proposing a scenario I had to ask myself *how will people move or how will they feel? Surprised, curious, excited or melancholic?* For this reason what I have found being more important than any statement domineering concept is asking the right questions and paying close attention to the *presence* of the future library that will ultimately affect and be affected by the place. The project accepts the uncertainty of the outcome while remaining humble to the place wishing to deliver the narrative of a children library in a picturesque corner of Italy. A stratification of atmospheres. An architecture of empathy.

In the end, I want to address through T.S. Eliot's wise words that after this process has ended, I return to the place it was very born, and get to know it *for the first time*. Ultimately, this paper does not impose an answer, but learns to ask questions of perception in the journey towards a children library that is capable of delivering a great moment of presence



## Acknowledgment

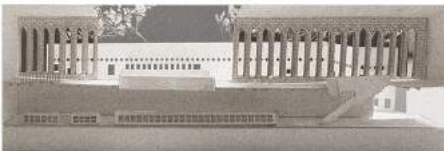
I would like to express shortly my gratitude towards the people without this Thesis wouldn't have been possible.

I want to thank to Professor Ilmari Lahdelma and Jenni Poutanen for their guidance and support, and Professor Klaske Havik for inspiring me to concretize my curiosities and passions that further lead to choose to address these questions as the subject of my Master Thesis.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my dear parents, my very best friends and life partner for their incredible patience and support. It has been a long journey so I couldn't be more grateful for having you.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank you, reader, for having the patience to flip through the pages of this album.





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